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HOW TO BECOME A
GREAT JAZZ IMPROVISER
FROM THE GROUND UP

By Brent Vaartstra

For Bb instruments

***This book is for those who
love music, want to become
better jazz musicians, and
are ready to take action.***

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How to Use This Book

First off, thanks so much for buying this book! Personally, I could not be more excited for you. I'm 100% confident that you are going to get a ton out of it. But before I formally introduce you to Zero to Improv and everything you will learn, let's talk about **how to use it**.

This book is built from the ground up, meaning I start with the fundamentals and continue building off the concepts in intentional order. If you want to get the very most you can get out of it, I would highly suggest starting from the beginning.

However, this is a great book to reference when in a time of need as well. So feel free to go through it in whatever way feels appropriate for you!

It's important that you know that you can listen to every example and exercise in this book.

In your download folder, you will have all of the mp3's for the Exercises I have provided. But as long as you have an internet connection handy, you can **click on any of the musical notation in this book and listen to it**.

Go ahead give it a try!

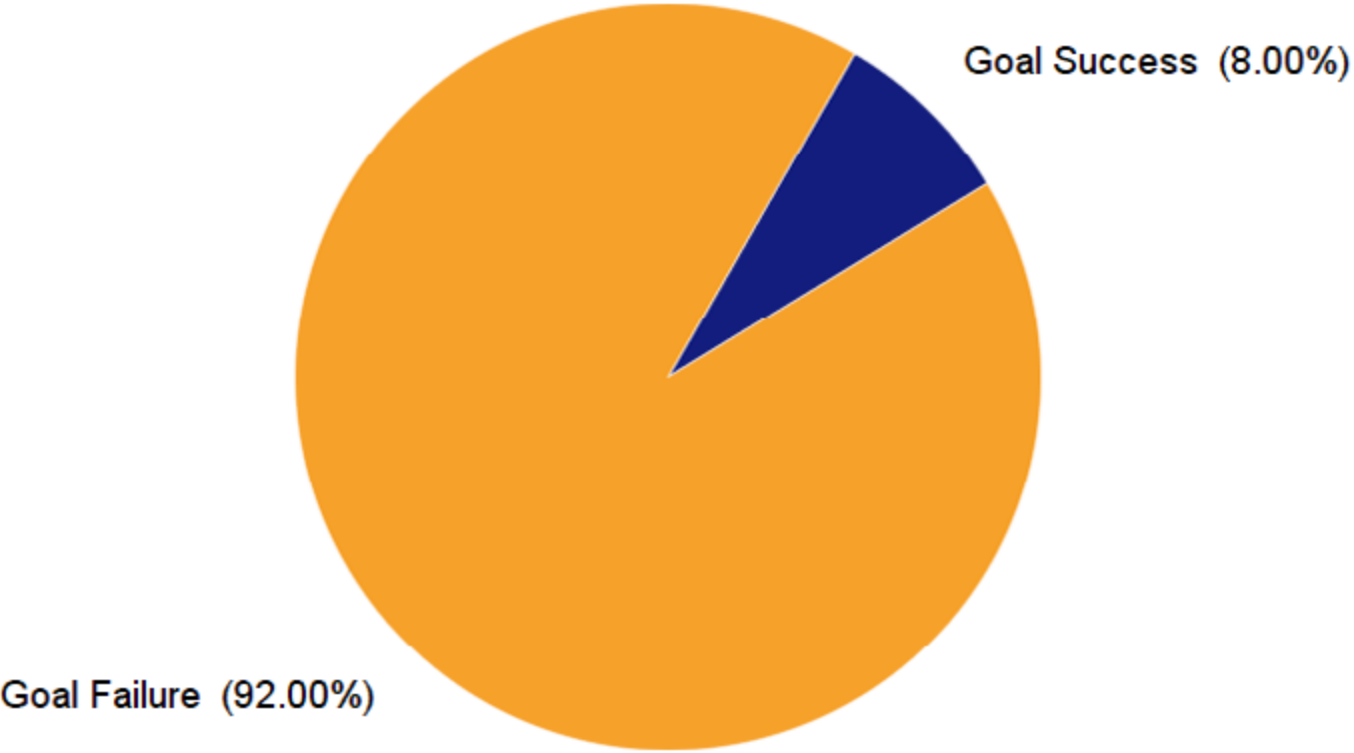


Getting Started

This is not your regular music book.

Let me explain: I find that a lot of instructional music books lead you through a vast amount of information, all great information, but do far more demonstration than calling to action. Quite honestly, many of the music books on my shelf have been used mostly to reference on occasion, and haven't had a profound effect on my musical abilities.

But this music book is going to be different! Not only will I be giving you lots of demonstrations and material, but I will also be asking you to **take action**.



I want to talk about *action* for a second because I believe it's important.

According to a survey of 1,562 respondents conducted by the University of Scranton, only 8% of those who made New Year's Resolutions achieved their goals. That's 92% who failed! That's a lot of talk and no action.

Action is what occurs when we genuinely want something to happen. If we have a good idea, but we don't take action, that means we didn't truly want it. We just liked the idea of it.

I've taught students who genuinely wanted to become better musicians. How did I know? They were taking action. I would give them some work for the week, and they would come back with some serious progress to show. Not perfection, but progress.

I've taught others who liked the idea of it, but when push came to shove, they weren't willing to put the effort in. That's okay! Perhaps it was just not for them.

So I want you to know upfront: Becoming a better jazz musician does not come cheap and easy. It takes more than just buying an eBook or a course. It takes work. It takes action.

I've designed this book so that I am always giving you a way to apply the material you are learning. I call them **"Practice Challenges."** You'll see them throughout the book.

I'm assuming you bought this eBook because you like jazz and want to learn how to play it better. So I know you're up for the challenge! I want you to be one of the 8%.

My Goals for You

While writing this book, I've had three goals for you in mind. All of the material provided revolves around these three goals. Ultimately, I want you to leave this book getting out of it these things:

- » **Learn to navigate your instrument better.**
- » **Understand jazz language better.**
- » **Have years and years of practice material to work on.**

Pretty simple right? They all play into each other quite nicely. Now you know what I'm trying to help you do as you work through this book.

But here's the deal:

My goals for you aren't your goals. Quite honestly, I hope you enjoy this book. But more than that I want you to feel like this book had an impact on your jazz playing. I'll do my part by providing you tangible information and calling you to action, but you'll have to do your part as well!

I want to encourage you to **set goals for your jazz playing**, because setting goals can make all of the difference. In fact, many studies have been conducted, and the results are in: *those who set goals (and write them down) are far more likely to succeed than those who don't.*

I want you to grab a pencil and paper right now. Write down where you feel you are at in your jazz playing today, and then write down where you want to be. Don't be afraid to dream big!

Now make sure you hold on to that piece of paper. Post it on your wall, or somewhere you will be reminded of it on a regular basis. If you did this, you're already off to a great start!

I guarantee you that this book is going to help you achieve those goals. How do I know? Because just about everything in this book is things that professional jazz musicians are continually practicing and working on. Which brings us to this...

What You Will Learn

This book is all about **jazz improvisation** and becoming a better jazz improviser. Improvisation is a foundational element of jazz music, and so this deserves a lot of attention.

Before I go into more specifics of what we will be covering, I want to present to you an important rule that you will see come up time and time again throughout this book:

The Jazz Improv Rule:

To become a better jazz improviser, you need to understand jazz harmony.

It's a pretty simple rule. If you want to become a better jazz soloist, you have to know how chord progressions work. That's why this book starts from the ground up. It starts with the fundamentals and builds. This is what you will learn:

Important scales. How to master them on your instrument, and how to improve your technical ability.

- » **Chord construction.** How to build triads and 7th chords and use them to actually improvise.
- » **Scales and their relationship to chords.**
- » **Chord progressions.** Where they come from, how to build them, how to improvise over them, and the important ones you should know.
- » **Jazz repertoire.** How to learn jazz standards and how to improvise over them.
- » **Developing jazz language.** How to conceptualize it and how to learn it by ear.

To supplement your learning process while going through this book, I highly suggest that you are doing the #1 most important thing you can do for you jazz playing: **Listen.**

If you are not listening to jazz, you will never get it. Don't underestimate this!

Final Thoughts Before You Start

I don't know where you are at in your jazz playing. You could be a beginner, advanced or somewhere in between. Regardless, **this book is for everybody.**

Perhaps you may think you know all of your scales, but that doesn't mean you should skip those sections. There may be some calls to action that you've never tried before, or maybe some review is in order.

When writing this book, I've kept all skill levels in mind. For the beginners, I've made a point to define things clearly and not skip steps. This book is very methodical. It starts with the basics and continues to build off of each concept.

For the advanced players, I've encouraged you to go above and beyond the material on the pages.

Note for Bb Instruments:

In addition, this book is written for all melodic instruments. In other words, the material isn't written for your instrument specifically. It is composed in such a way that everyone can get immense value out of it. I've made a point to create examples and exercises that respect the ranges of most instruments, but in some cases, you may feel the need to bring some things down or up an octave. There's nothing wrong with that!

So your journey begins! I couldn't be more excited for you to dig into this material. **Remember to take action.** You'll get out of this book what you put into it, and so I encourage you to go all in.

Ready? Here we go!



Setting the Foundation for Jazz Improvisation

Alright, you made it.

Remember *The Jazz Improv Rule* I just gave you? I'll spare you the task of scrolling back a few pages, because I believe it's worth repeating:

The Jazz Improv Rule:

To become a better jazz improviser, you need to understand jazz harmony.

This is what Part 1 is going to be all about. We're going to start from the beginning and start discovering how understanding harmony is the cornerstone of great jazz improvisation...or any kind of musical improvisation for that matter.

CHAPTER 1

Scales and How to Use Them

One of the questions I get that makes me cringe the most is *“What scales can I play over... (a dominant 7 chord)”*.

It's not that scales are bad, or that it's a dumb question. It's that thinking about scales as a means to improvise is not the best way to go. To play jazz, one must learn the jazz language. In my opinion, scales are not a proper means to learn jazz language, at least not in the way many musicians seem to use them.

What scales are useful for:

- » **Learning your instrument.** Scales are essential for learning how to navigate your instrument, understanding chord qualities, how to read music, and other cornerstone elements of learning how to play. If you want to be a good jazz improviser, you need to know your instrument!
- » **Technique.** Scales can help train you to move freely around your instrument without restrictions so that you can execute any musical situation you come across.
- » **Conceptualizing musical ideas.** Scales can help you identify pitch collections that conceptualize a harmonic or melodic concept. Understanding different aspects of music theory can be incredibly helpful.

For example: knowing how to play an altered scale can help you identify the notes that make an altered dominant chord an altered dominant chord. Or you can play a minor pentatonic scale a minor third up from the root of the altered dominant, and now you've identified all of the altered notes in that chord from an entirely different perspective.

What scales are bad for:

- » **Learning jazz language.** To learn jazz language, you need to be listening to jazz music and learning solos and smaller musical phrases of the greats by ear. Scales are pitch collections, not musical phrases. They will not help you learn the way jazz musicians speak and communicate with each other.
- » **Learning how to play melodically.** A scale is not a melody. A scale is a set of musical notes ordered by fundamental frequency or pitch (*there's a bland text book definition for you*). To play melodically, you need to learn melodies. Scales can show you what the "right notes" to play are, but they don't teach you how to create actual music.
- » **Improving your ear.** One of the most important things to be equipped with as a jazz musician is a great ear. To become an extraordinary improviser, you need to be developing your ear.

Scales are calculated, and therefore not great for training your ear. If you are playing a ii-V-I chord progression and you know that you can play the major scale of the I chord over everything, you probably won't be playing any "wrong notes." But you also won't be able to hear the difference between those three chords. Even if you play the appropriate scales over each chord individually, it will still sound calculated.

I want to emphasize that learning scales is not a bad thing when it comes to jazz. In fact, they are incredibly important for the reasons I mentioned above. However, I think it's important to start our scale studies with this disclaimer.

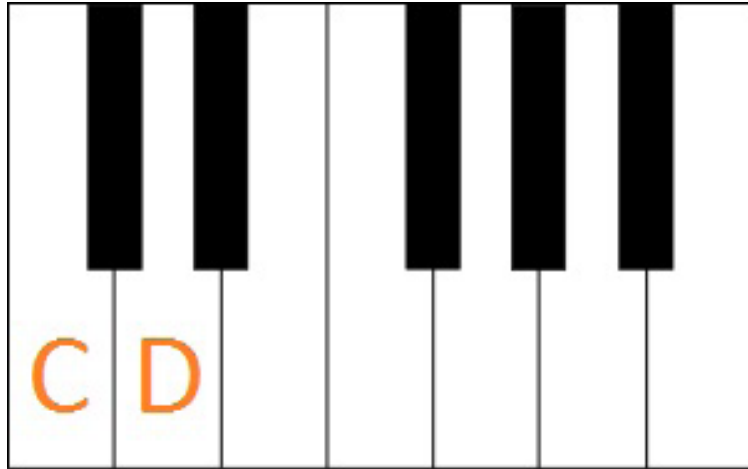
Basic scales you need to know

Consider this your library of scales to make sure you have in your arsenal. Feel free to come back to these at any time you need! For the sake of simple demonstration, these are all notated in Concert C for C instruments, Bb for Bb instruments, and Eb for Eb instruments). These all span one octave and often repeat the top octave note before descending.

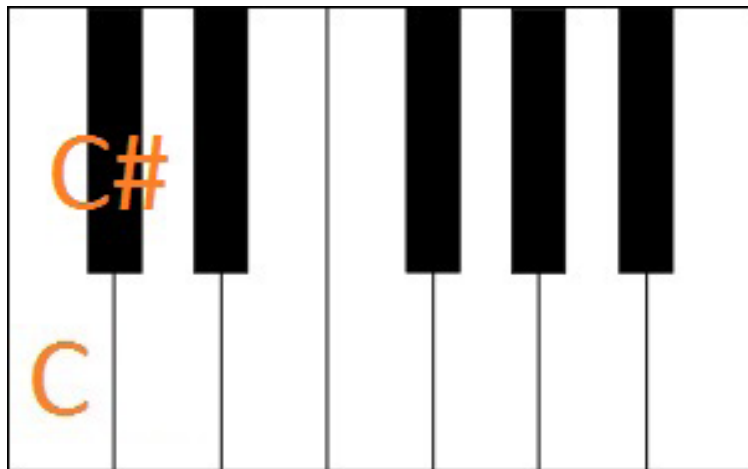
Remember: you can click on any of these scales to listen to them, if you have an internet connection.

You will observe that for each scale I give formulas. The intervallic formula is represented in "steps". **W= whole step. H= half step.**

For example, the notes C and D are a whole step away from each other.



And C and C# are a half step away from each other.



Major scale

Intervallic formula: W-W-H-W-W-W-H

Scale tone formula: 1-2-3-4-5-6-7

C major scale: C-D-E-F-G-A-B



Minor scales

There are three basic minor scales to be familiar with: **natural**, **harmonic**, and **melodic**. The fundamental shared characteristic is the flatted 3rd.

Natural minor

Intervallic formula: W-H-W-W-H-W-W

Scale tone formula: 1-2-b3-4-5-b6-b7

C natural minor scale: C-D-Eb-F-G-Ab-Bb



Harmonic minor

Intervallic formula: W-H-W-W-H-W+H-H

Scale tone formula: 1-2-b3-4-5-b6-7

C harmonic minor scale: C-D-Eb-F-G-Ab-B



Melodic minor

Intervallic formula: W-H-W-W-W-W-H

Scale tone formula: 1-2-b3-4-5-6-7

C melodic minor scale: C-D-Eb-F-G-A-B



* It's important to note that with the melodic minor in classical music, the 6th and 7th are flatted when the scale descends. Essentially making it a descending natural minor scale. This is unnecessary in a jazz context, so it has been left out.

Diminished scales

Diminished scales are what we call “octatonic”, meaning they have eight notes in them, as opposed to seven. What’s interesting about diminished scales is that they are symmetrical. They are built from alternating whole steps and half steps, and therefore there are two different ways to play a diminished scale.

You can either start with a half step or a whole step, but you would use them in different contexts. The **Whole Half Diminished Scale** would be used in the context of a diminished 7th chord. The **Half Whole Diminished Scale** would be used in the context of a dominant 7th(b9) chord. I won’t go into detail about chord-scale relationships right now; that’s for a later chapter! Regardless, I think it’s good to practice both.

Whole Half Diminished Scale

Intervallic formula: W-H-W-H-W-H-W-H

Scale tone formula: 1-2-b3-4-#4-#5-6-7-8

C whole half diminished scale: C-D-Eb-F-Gb-G#-A-B

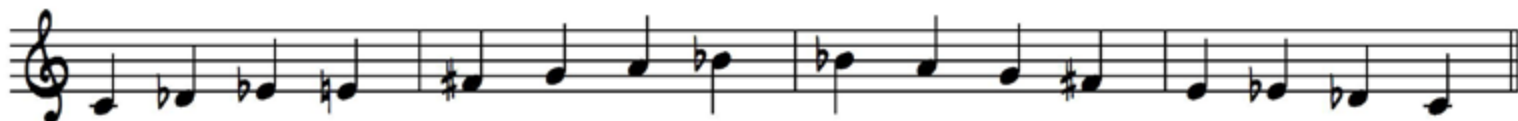


Half Whole Diminished Scale

Intervallic formula: H-W-H-W-H-W-H-W

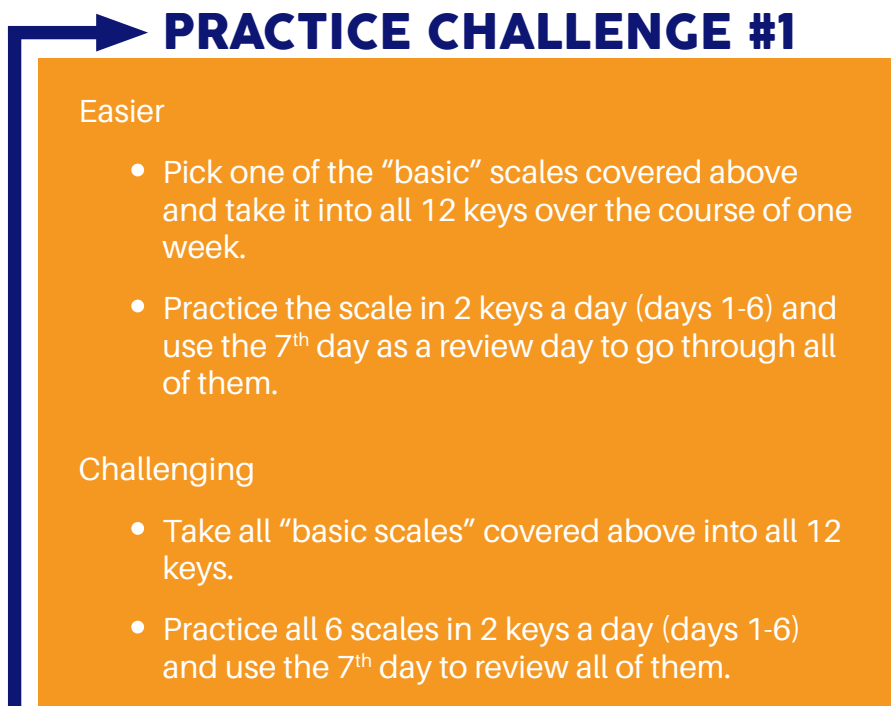
Scale tone formula: 1-b2-b3-3-#4-5-6-b7-8

C half whole diminished scale: C-Db-Eb-E-F#-G-A-Bb



We're not done with scales yet, but I would say that these are the fundamental ones. Knowing these can be incredibly helpful in understanding your instrument well, which is important if you want to be an effective improviser.

Remember how I said I was going to be calling you to action throughout this book? Well, we're going to take a pause in our scales studies for your first Practice Challenge!

A graphic for 'PRACTICE CHALLENGE #1'. It features a blue arrow pointing right towards the title. Below the title is an orange box containing two sections: 'Easier' and 'Challenging', each with a bulleted list of instructions.

➔ PRACTICE CHALLENGE #1

Easier

- Pick one of the "basic" scales covered above and take it into all 12 keys over the course of one week.
- Practice the scale in 2 keys a day (days 1-6) and use the 7th day as a review day to go through all of them.

Challenging

- Take all "basic scales" covered above into all 12 keys.
- Practice all 6 scales in 2 keys a day (days 1-6) and use the 7th day to review all of them.

Just in case you're wondering, *"How should I know whether to take the Easier option or the Challenging option?"* allow me to speak to that.

If you are already familiar with all of these scales and feel like you just need a refresher on them, try the Challenging option. If you feel like you're fairly rusty on several of these, take the Easier option. Less is more! Use this kind of logic for these Practice Challenges throughout the book.

Now, you could have just read this Practice Challenge and wondered, ***how do I take these scales into all 12 keys?*** I think it's important that I address that before moving on to more scales. Let's take a slight detour.

Taking music into all 12 keys

Taking musical examples into all 12 keys is something that I will suggest and ask you to do throughout this book. So it's important that you understand *how you should do it* and *why you should do it*.

What do I mean by all 12 keys? I'm talking about the 12 keys in western music as identified by the musical alphabet.

I'll list them chromatically: **A-Bb-B-C-Db-D-Eb-E-F-Gb-G-Ab.**

Personally, I have a hard time doing anything I'm told to do if I don't understand why I am doing it. So let me first explain how practicing music in all 12 keys, as opposed to only the original key, can have a lot of benefits.

1. It will improve your technical ability.

As an improviser, you don't want to be limited in your navigation of your instrument. You want to be free. Therefore, it is important that you feel comfortable playing in any key. Naturally, some will feel stronger than others, but the more comfortable you are with the tougher ones, the better.

2. Your ears will improve.

Taking scales, licks, chord progressions, and jazz standards through all 12 keys is ear training that pays off big. When you start to take familiar jazz language and play it in a key you are not used to, you begin to rely on your ears more than your intellect or muscle memory.

When you become familiar with a particular key, muscle memory sets in and your ears become conditioned to navigate your instrument in that environment. When you start exploring unfamiliar keys, your ears have to catch up. By taking musical information through all 12 keys you are making the unfamiliar familiar, and this will open up your ears in a way you never could have imagined.

3. You're going to know that music 12X better.

Repetition is key, and when you take musical information through all 12 keys you are bound to be repeating it many times.

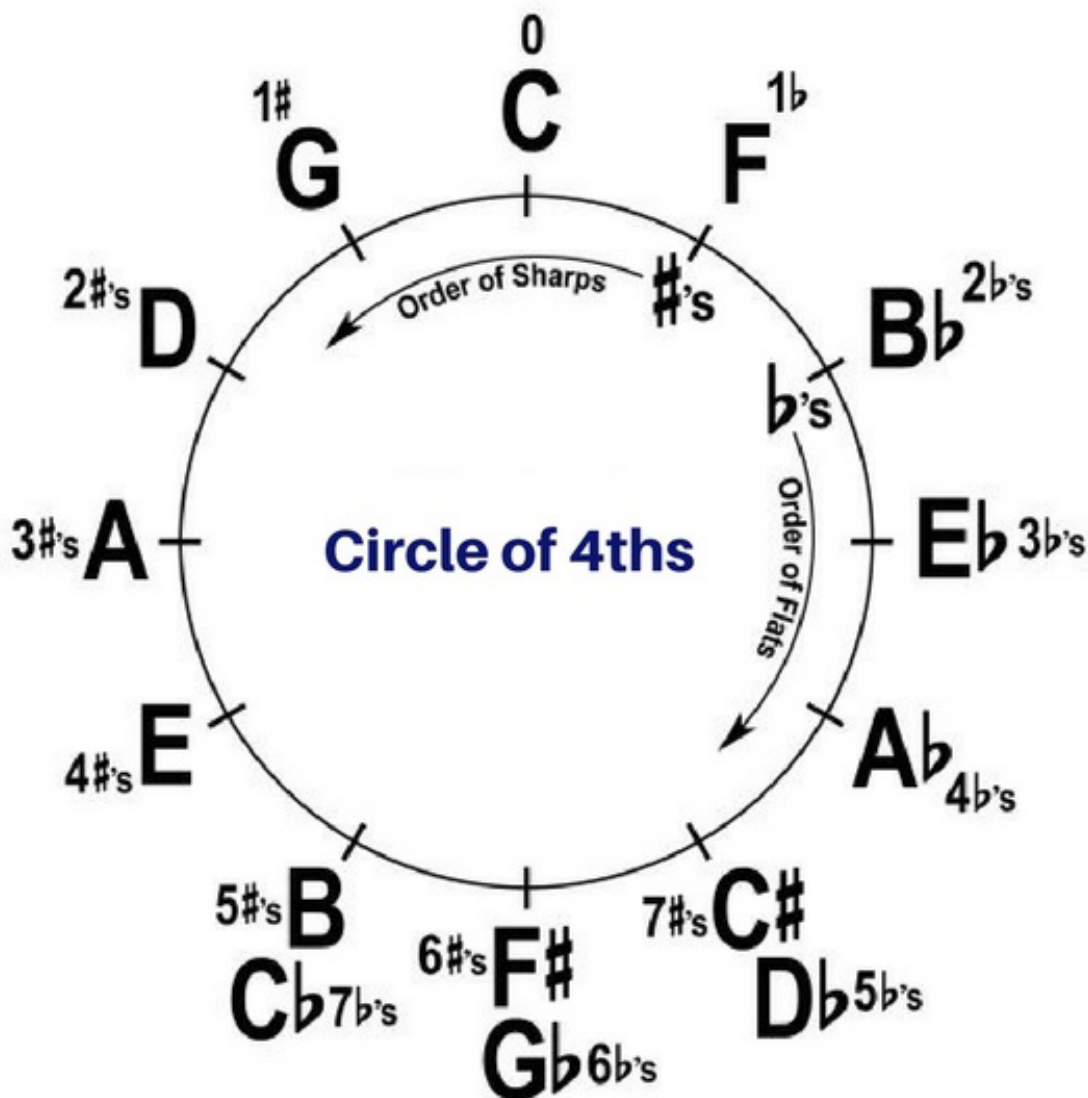
Let's just say you are working on one of these "basic" scales for your Practice Challenge. We can be **conservative** in saying that it will take you **at least 10 times** to truly feel comfortable playing it in one key. Apply that to all 12 keys and do the math: **120 repetitions** at the minimum, and that's only one practice session. The bonus is you're making your ear and your brain think harder when you are doing more than one key, which further ingrains it into your memory. If you ever want to memorize any musical content, this is the way to do it thoroughly!

How to practice in all 12 keys

There is no hard and fast rule on how to practice in all 12 keys. You could go through them chromatically, or you could go through them at random. But allow me to make a suggestion.

Use the **Cycle of 4ths** as a frame of reference. Why? Because a lot of jazz harmony cycles in 4ths. Also because it's an easy way to organize practicing them without doing them in chromatic order.

When I think of cycling in 4ths, I visualize the **Circle of 4ths**:



You may have seen this chart before, or perhaps its inverse, the Circle of 5ths. This chart is useful for memorizing how many flats or sharps are in each key's key signature (which is important), but also a handy visual way to approach practicing in all 12 keys.

So when I practice in all 12 keys, I take the order: **C-F-Bb-Eb-Ab-Db-Gb-B-E-A-D-G**. So for Practice Challenge #1, I would practice a scale in Concert C and F on Day 1, Bb and Eb on Day 2...etc.

Let's get back to scales now that you are in the know of how and why you should take music into all 12 keys.

The Major Modes

It is important that you understand the modes, how to construct them and how to play them. This will especially come in handy when they are referred to later in this book when we talk about chord/scale relationships.

What is a mode?

Essentially a mode is a type of scale. 'Mode' comes from the Latin for 'manner or method' but the names of them are Greek because that's where they originated from.

Each mode is related to its parent major scale (Ionian). You can think of each mode as starting and finishing on a given tone of the parent scale.

Let's go through each mode of the major scale. For demonstration purposes, I'm going to notate each mode as it relates to the key of C major. Later I'll test your knowledge with a little quiz!

Ionian (Major scale)

Ionian is the 1st mode of the major scale and starts on the first scale degree. The Ionian mode is the parent major scale so just think of it that way.

Intervallic formula: W-W-H-W-W-W-H

Scale tone formula: 1-2-3-4-5-6-7

C Ionian: C-D-E-F-G-A-B



Dorian

Dorian is the 2nd mode of the major scale and starts on the second scale degree. You can also think of this mode as a natural minor scale with a raised 6th.

Intervallic formula: W-H-W-W-W-H-W

Scale tone formula: 1-2-b3-4-5-6-b7

D Dorian: D-E-F-G-A-B-C



Phrygian

Phrygian is the 3rd mode of the major scale and starts on the third scale degree. You can think of this mode as a natural minor scale with a flatted 2nd.

Intervallic formula: H-W-W-W-H-W-W

Scale tone formula: 1-b2-b3-4-5-b6-b7

E Phrygian: E-F-G-A-B-C-D



Lydian

Lydian is the 4th mode of the major scale and starts on the fourth scale degree. You can think of this mode as a major scale with a raised 4th.

Intervallic formula: W-W-W-H-W-W-H

Scale tone formula: 1-2-3-#4-5-6-7

F Lydian: F-G-A-B-C-D-E



Mixolydian

Mixolydian is the 5th mode of the major scale and starts on the fifth scale degree. You can think of this mode as a major scale with a flatted 7th.

Intervallic formula: W-W-H-W-W-H-W

Scale tone formula: 1-2-3-4-5-6-b7

G Mixolydian: G-A-B-C-D-E-F



Aeolian

Aeolian is the 6th mode of the major scale and starts on the sixth scale degree. The Aeolian mode is the same as the natural minor scale.

Intervallic formula: W-H-W-W-H-W-W

Scale tone formula: 1-2-b3-4-5-b6-b7

A Aeolian: A-B-C-D-E-F-G



Locrian

Locrian is the 7th and last mode of the major scale and starts on the seventh scale degree. The Locrian mode is a bit of a more obscure one. The best way to think of it is a major scale starting and ending on the leading tone (the preceding and last tone of the scale).

Intervallic formula: H-W-W-H-W-W-W

Scale tone formula: 1-b2-b3-4-b5-b6-b7

B Locrian: B-C-D-E-F-G-A



When you understand that the modes are all related to a parent scale, it becomes much easier to memorize. Essentially, you just have to know how to create the parent major scale and then know which scale degree you start on. Of course, depending on your instrument this can be harder or easier to visualize. On the piano, everything is fairly plain to see.

It's not enough to simply understand this, though. As a jazz improviser, you need to be able to summon up these modes in any key that is called upon. Not because you will be using them to create music necessarily, but because they will help you learn to navigate your instrument better.

Here's an example. If you want to play an F Mixolydian scale, you need to ask yourself: ***Of what major scale is F the 5th note?***

So knowing your major scales in all 12 keys is crucial. If you happen to be a little bit foggy on how to construct your major scales, refer to the Circle of 4ths chart I showed you. That chart tells you how many flats and sharps are in each key, so if you were to notate your major scales on some staff paper, you could put the appropriate #'s or b's in the key signature and build the scale from there.

Okay, let's put your mode knowledge to the test! This is just another example of how I will be calling you to action throughout this book. This short homework assignment will help you solidify this knowledge. Whether the major modes are new or review for you, this will be good to try.

I'm going to list off different modes, ask you to notate them, and write the note letter spelling of each (A-B-C-D...). Don't forget to play them on your instrument! You can put the key signature in of the given key, or just manually put in the accidentals. Feel free to print these pages, or copy this on a piece of notation paper.

Here we go!

C Mixolydian



Parent scale:

Note letter spelling:

F# Dorian



Parent scale:

Note letter spelling:

D Locrian



Parent scale:

Note letter spelling:

F Aeolian



Parent scale:

Note letter spelling:

E Locrian



Parent scale:

Note letter spelling:

D Ionian



Parent scale:

Note letter spelling:

A Lydian



Parent scale:

Note letter spelling:

F# Phrygian



Parent scale:

Note letter spelling:

C# Mixolydian



Parent scale:

Note letter spelling:

B Aeolian



Parent scale:

Note letter spelling:

How did you do?

Answers

C Mixolydian



Parent scale: F major

Note letter spelling: C-D-E-F-G-A-Bb

F# Dorian



Parent scale: E major

Note letter spelling: F#-G#-A-B-C#-D#-E

D Locrian



Parent scale: Eb major

Note letter spelling: D-Eb-F-G-Ab-Bb-C

F Aeolian



Parent scale: [Ab major](#)

Note letter spelling: F-G-Ab-Bb-C-Db-Eb

E Locrian



Parent scale: [F major](#)

Note letter spelling: E-F-G-A-Bb-C-D

D Ionian



Parent scale: [D major](#)

Note letter spelling: D-E-F#-G-A-B-C#

A Lydian



Parent scale: E major

Note letter spelling: A-B-C#-D#-E-F#-G#

F# Phrygian



Parent scale: D major

Note letter spelling: F#-G-A-B-C#-D-E

C# Mixolydian



Parent scale: F# major

Note letter spelling: C#-D#-E#-F#-G#-A#-B

B Aeolian



Parent scale: [D major](#)

Note letter spelling: [B-C#-D-E-F#-G-A](#)

If you made any mistakes on these, go ahead and take a look back at where you went wrong. Perhaps you based the mode off of the incorrect parent scale. Try to identify how you miscalculated. Perhaps you used the wrong accidentals on certain notes. Go back and make sure that your scale spelling reflects the key signature of the parent scale. Again, if you need help with that, refer to the Circle of 4ths diagram.

If this is new for you, I will encourage you to keep practicing these. Simply write down a list of different modes, notate them, and most importantly, **play them on your instrument.**

Remember, practicing scales and modes aren't a means of making music. They are a means of understanding your instrument better. But if you want to be a great jazz improviser, you will want to know your instrument inside and out. Additionally, you will want to **understand how music works.** That's exactly what working on these scales helps us do. You will see that these are great building blocks as you progress through the book.

Now let's go over a simple exercise to help you practice all of the modes of the major scale together. In this exercise, you will be starting on Ionian, playing the scale up one octave for two bars, going up to the next note and coming down Dorian, back up Phrygian, down Lydian, and so on and so forth. If this doesn't make sense right away, the exercise will be fairly self-explanatory. **Remember: you can click on the exercise to listen to it.**

Exercise 1

The image displays seven musical staves, each representing a different mode of the major scale in 4/4 time. The modes are labeled above their respective staves: Ionian, Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, Mixolydian, Aeolian, and Locrian. The Ionian mode is shown for two octaves, while the others are shown for one octave. The notes are written as quarter notes on a treble clef staff.

Ionian

Dorian

Phrygian

Lydian

Mixolydian

Aeolian

Locrian

Ionian (2 octaves)

Not too tricky right? Nevertheless, this is an excellent way to combine the modes together and gets you moving on your instrument. Make sure you feel comfortable playing this exercise.

Here are some ways you can take this exercise further:

- » Practice it in other keys. All 12 is always great, but several others will do!
- » If the range of your instrument permits, play each mode for two octaves rather than one. That would have you playing the Ionian three octaves on the way back down.

Let's expand this exercise by adding a pattern to it. We will be applying more patterns to scales in upcoming pages, but this is a little sneak peak. The pattern used is a **3rds pattern**. Essentially, you are playing a major scale but separating each scale degree by a corresponding major or minor third related to the scale. This pattern has you starting on the tonic of the scale jumping up a major third, and coming back down to the second scale degree, then up a minor third and back down to the third scale degree, and so on. This will make more sense when you play it.

Depending on what instrument you play this could really push your range. Great! This is a fantastic warm up exercise. But feel free to adjust octaves if you feel it is necessary. No harm in that!

Exercise 2

The image displays musical notation for Exercise 2, which illustrates the '3rds pattern' across various scales. The notation is presented on five staves, each containing two measures of music. The scales and their corresponding patterns are as follows:

- Ionian:** The first measure starts on C4 and follows the pattern C-E-G-A-B-A-G-F-E-D-C. The second measure starts on C4 and follows the pattern C-E-G-A-B-A-G-F-E-D-C.
- Dorian:** The first measure starts on D4 and follows the pattern D-F-A-B-C-B-A-G-F-E-D. The second measure starts on D4 and follows the pattern D-F-A-B-C-B-A-G-F-E-D.
- Phrygian:** The first measure starts on E4 and follows the pattern E-G-A-B-C-B-A-G-F-E. The second measure starts on E4 and follows the pattern E-G-A-B-C-B-A-G-F-E.
- Lydian:** The first measure starts on F4 and follows the pattern F-A-C-D-E-D-C-B-A-G. The second measure starts on F4 and follows the pattern F-A-C-D-E-D-C-B-A-G.
- Mixolydian:** The first measure starts on G4 and follows the pattern G-B-A-C-D-E-D-C-B. The second measure starts on G4 and follows the pattern G-B-A-C-D-E-D-C-B.
- Aeolian:** The first measure starts on A4 and follows the pattern A-C-B-A-G-F-E-D-C. The second measure starts on A4 and follows the pattern A-C-B-A-G-F-E-D-C.
- Locrian:** The first measure starts on B4 and follows the pattern B-D-C-B-A-G-F-E-D. The second measure starts on B4 and follows the pattern B-D-C-B-A-G-F-E-D.
- Ionian (2 octaves):** The first measure starts on C4 and follows the pattern C-E-G-A-B-A-G-F-E-D-C. The second measure starts on C5 and follows the pattern C-E-G-A-B-A-G-F-E-D-C.

Modes of the Melodic Minor you should know

I don't feel it necessary for our purposes to know all of the modes of the melodic minor. However, there are some fairly common ones that are particularly useful when talking about chord scale theory. Therefore I think it's appropriate that we cover them now.

As is the case with the major modes, each one of these is based on a parent scale, only this time the parent scale is melodic minor. Make sure you have these in your arsenal and ready to go. I will mention what chords these are appropriate to associate with, but I will go into further detail on that later in the book.

For the sake of simplicity and since we aren't covering all of the modes of the melodic minor, I will notate these in C (concert C, Bb, and Eb depending on your instrument).

Lydian Dominant

Lydian Dominant is the 4th mode of the melodic minor and starts on the fourth degree of the scale. This chord is often used over a #11 chord (ex. C7#11).

Intervallic formula: W-W-W-H-W-H-W

Scale tone formula: 1-2-3-#4-5-6-b7

C Lydian Dominant: C-D-E-F#-G-A-Bb



Altered Scale

The Altered Scale is the 7th mode of the melodic minor and starts on the seventh degree of the scale. This scale is related most commonly to dominant 7 altered chords, altered meaning the 4 possible types of alterations over a dominant 7 chord: *b9-#9-#11-b13*.

Intervallic formula: H-W-H-W-W-W-W

Scale tone formula: 1-b2-b3-3-#4-b6-b7

C Altered Scale: C-Db-Eb-E-F#-Ab-Bb



Scales Not Mentioned and Why

At this point I have covered all of the scales I think are important to focus on. If you're a scale junky, you're probably crying out, *"but there are so many more!"* And you would be right.

But I'm not a scales guy. As I hope I've driven home by now, **scales are a means of learning your instrument, and not to make music.** So forgive me if there are some missing.

I will cover the major and minor pentatonic a little bit later, which I think are relevant scales that can be made musical. So I'll present it in a more applicable context.

I have purposefully left out a scale that I think is overused and not helpful. **The Blues Scale.** Why you may ask? In short, the blues scale is an attempt at conceptualizing blues language by adding a b5 chromatic passing tone to a minor pentatonic scale. As a result, this scale becomes a crutch for a lot of beginner jazz improvisers. I think there are better ways to go about identifying jazz and blues language. This is just my opinion, but trust me, you aren't missing out on anything!

Applying Patterns to Scales

When learning scales, I believe it is important to practice them in such a way that helps improve technique on your instrument. It's great to be able to play a scale because you know it, but it's even better if you can utilize it to help you move on your instrument.

This is a big part of what we want to accomplish when learning scales as jazz improvisers: **having the freedom to do anything we want on our instrument.**

So let's go over some patterns you can practice over any type of scale. These are relatively easy to apply and will give you a good workout!

Exercise 3

1231 Pattern

This pattern walks up three scale degrees and goes back to the tonic. Then it moves up to the second scale degree, walks up three from it and back down to the second degree, and so on and so forth.



Exercise 4

1321 Pattern

This pattern jumps up to the major 3rd and walks back down to the tonic. Then the second scale degree jumps up to the minor 3rd and walks back down to the second degree, and so on.



Exercise 5

1235 Pattern

This pattern walks up the scale for 3 scale degrees and then skips the 4 landing on the 5. Then it walks up three scale degrees starting on the second, skips the 5 and lands on the 6. This is a pattern that can be heard at the beginning of John Coltrane's solo on Giant Steps.



Exercise 6

Ascending Triplets Pattern

This pattern moves up the scale in triplets, essentially 1-2-3-2-3-4-3-4-5...

When the scale descends, the triplet movement still ascends.



Exercise 7

Triads Pattern #1

This one gets a little bit trickier! For every scale tone you can create a triad. Don't know what a triad is? Don't worry, we will go over all of that in the next chapter of the book. Don't know how to build a triad off of a scale tone? Again, don't worry. **But here's the crash course:** take any of the scale degrees and build a 3rd and 5th on top of it, making sure that each note is diatonic to the scale.



Exercise 8

Triads Pattern #2

Here's another pattern using the triads associated to the major scale. Consider this a sneak preview of the next chapter! This time the triads start on the 5th of each triad and move down towards their respective scale degree.



PRACTICE CHALLENGE #2

Easier

- Try taking any one of the "basic" scales or modes and apply the 6 patterns we just covered over the course of a week.
- Practice one pattern a day. On the 7th day review all of the patterns.

Challenging

- Pick a scale and apply the patterns while going through all 12 keys.
- Practice one pattern a day, 2 keys per day cycling in 4ths. Review on the 7th day.

The great thing about Practice Challenge #2 is that it can be repeated using other scales. Indeed the patterns do feel different and present challenges specific to particular scales. I would suggest making these kinds of practices part of your warm-up routine.

Okay, let's review what we know about scales:

Scales are necessary for learning and understanding your instrument.

- » Scales are good to work on to improve your technique.
- » Scales are not musical in and of themselves, and should not be used as a primary approach for jazz improvisation.
- » Modes are scales related to a parent key center.
- » Practicing scales in all 12 keys helps to make sure you can navigate all keys equally.
- » You can apply different patterns to scales to help you improve technique, flexibility, and better comprehension.
- » Scales can be a useful foundation to work from when understanding how jazz harmony works.

Before we go on to talk about chords, let's take a quick detour and talk about something important...

A Quick Lesson on Swing Feel

In the upcoming exercises most of the audio recordings demonstrate eighth notes with a **swing feel**.

Swing is a fairly common part of jazz language, and so I think this is important to cover. It's necessary that you understand what the implied rhythm of swung eighth notes are.

Straight eighth rhythm:



In a straight eighth rhythm, all notes are played evenly. You can count it 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &.

Swung eighth rhythm:

There are a few ways to perceive a swung eighth note rhythm, but in general, an underlying triplet feel is present. Here's a legato (smooth flowing with no breaks between notes) way to think of a swung eighth.



A more staccato (meaning abrupt/short) way to phrase the swung eighths would be like this:



In general, you will want to stick to a more legato phrasing of swung eighths. Here's one last way to think of it without the use of triplets:



Keep in mind that unless the music specifically calls for a straight eight or Latin groove, jazz musicians will swing eighth notes by default. In other words, if you see plain eighth notes, swing them unless otherwise directed.

You want to be sure to find the right balance in your swing. Over exaggerating the swing is generally not encouraged. You want to find a middle ground between swung eighths and straight.

C H A P T E R 2

Chords from the Ground Up

Triads

In my opinion, too many jazz students overlook triads and move straight to 7th chords. But triads are so important. They are **the foundation of any chord**. Every other chord builds on top of a triad.

Perhaps you already understand triads, and that's fine, this will be review for you. If triads are something you feel you could use some more knowledge on, this will be good for you. Either way, I will be calling you to action!

The goal is to not only define triads and understand how they are constructed, but to start to use them in a way that will aid our jazz improvisation.

Remember how I said scales aren't the best tools for improvising? Well, triads are a different story. Triads can be used in a musical way and I would highly suggest using them to outline chord changes and as tools for creating melodies.

Throughout this chapter, we will be doing exercises that connect different triads together. It's important that you apply them and see how they can work together. So what exactly is a triad?

What's a triad?

A triad is what I call the foundation of any chord. A more text book definition would be: a set of three notes that can be stacked in thirds.

Basic formula: Root-3rd-5th (*3rd and 5th altered depending on quality*)

There are four kinds of triads you need to know: **Major**, **Minor**, **Augmented**, and **Diminished**. Once you know these four, you have the necessary tools to start building every other kind of chord. First, let's go over major triads.

Major Triads

Formula for a major triad: Root-3rd-5th

Take a look at the C major scale so you can see where we grab these chord tones from.



When you stack these scale degrees on top of each other, you get a C major triad: C-E-G.



Nothing too complicated here! If this is foreign to you, be sure to spell out this triad on your instrument. If you play a chordal instrument, such as the piano or guitar, play this triad as a chord.

This next part is critically important to understand: A chord can be structured using any of the chord tones as a bass note. The C major triad notated above is in what we call **Root Position**. Root Position meaning, the root (C) is in the bass. But when we build the chord with a non-root chord tone in the bass, we get what we call an **inversion**.

Inversions and How They Work

Because triads consist of only three notes (*tri*), there is only a root position and two possible inversions: **1st Inversion** and **2nd Inversion**.

First I'll tell you how inversions work, and then I'll tell you why they are important as jazz improvisers.

1st Inversion means the 3rd will be the bass note. What's the next note up from the root? The 3rd. So now the triad will be structured **3rd-5th-Root**. Essentially, we just shifted the notes into a different order.

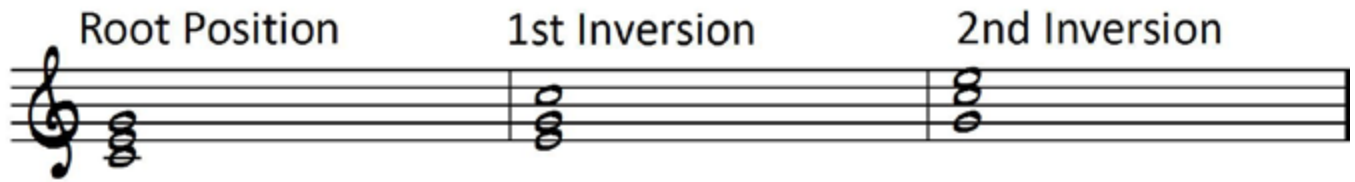


So now the C triad is spelled: E-G-C. The root moved to the top note. Same notes, same triad, different order.

2nd Inversion means the 5th will be the bass note. The next note up from the 3rd is the 5th. So now the triad will be structured **5th-Root-3rd**.



Again, not too difficult of a concept to understand. Here's Root Position, 1st Inversion and 2nd Inversion notated next to each other to help you visualize this further.



Why are inversions important?

As jazz improvisers, we need to be able to transition from chord to chord effortlessly. Of course, if you are an accompanist, the benefits of inversions are obvious. But using triad inversions in your single note lines is equally beneficial. It's often not practical or musical to use a triad (or any chord) starting on the root note. If the melodic line you are playing lands on the next chord, you want to know where the nearest chord tone is and how to outline it. This could mean you fall on the 3rd of the next chord. You want to know what the other chord tones are in relation to that note.

Now, of course when you improvise you don't want to be thinking about this stuff. **Music is a language.** When I speak in English (my native language) I'm not thinking about how I am communicating. It's natural for me. I'm just doing it. But when I practice Greek (My wife's native language) I have to think about it. I have to break it apart and figure out. If I say in Greek to someone *"I am going to the store,"* and they ask back *"What will you get there?"* I'd have to think about my response. It wouldn't be automatic (at least not yet). I need to practice in order for it to become natural.

So the same as I need to practice saying basic things and simple sentences, you have to do the same with music. Because at the end of the day, jazz improvisers need to be ready to respond to anything that could musically happen. You have to know the language and part of that is knowing the fundamentals.

So throughout our studies of triads and 7th chords, we will be doing exercises that are designed to help you practice these chord qualities with chord transitions.

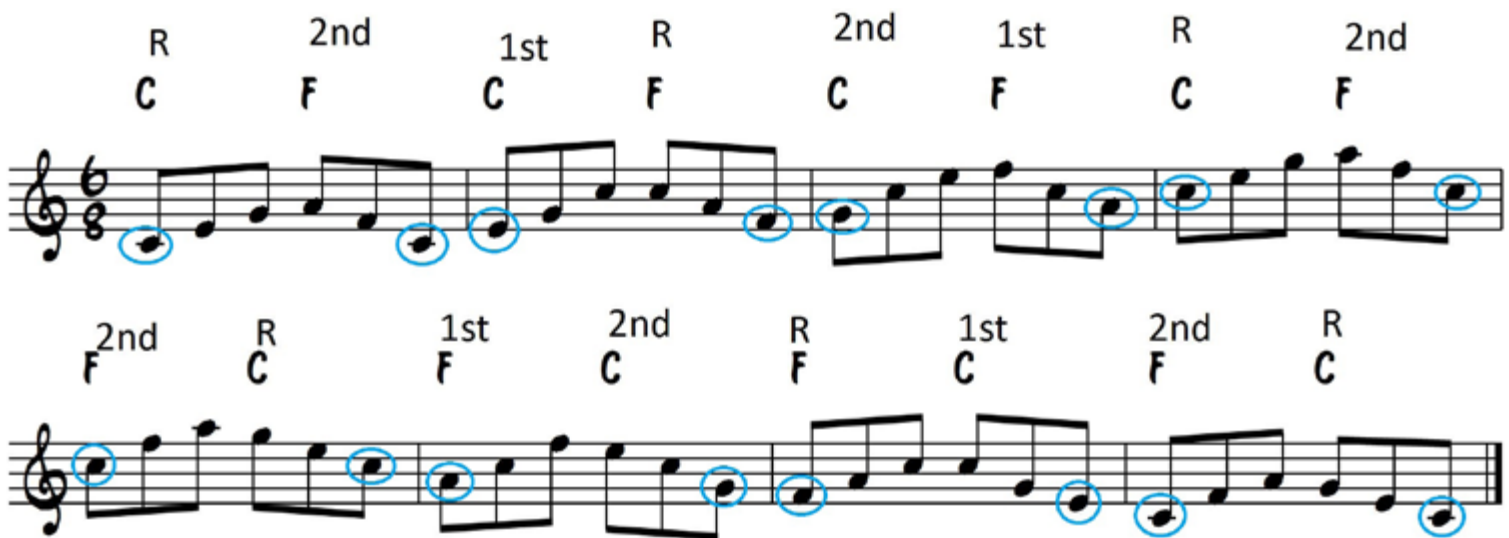
This first one switches between a **C major triad** and an **F major triad**. You can think of this as a I-IV chord progression. The idea is to ascend one triad and descend the next starting from the nearest chord tone. Essentially you will be playing the arpeggios of these triads and their inversions.

Exercise 9



Notice that starting in bar 5 the pattern switches so that the F triad is ascending and the C triad is descending. Each chord is played for three beats in 6/8 time.

A big part of this is understanding whether you are playing Root Position, 1st Inversion, or 2nd Inversion of the given triads. It's important that you can identify them. Allow me to do the first one of these for you.



I've labeled each triad as either R (Root Position), 1st (1st Inversion), or 2nd (2nd Inversion). And how do I identify the triads? **By the root.**

If the root is in the bass (C or F) it is in Root Position.

If the 3rd is in the bass (E or A) it is in 1st Inversion.

If the 5th is in the bass (G or C) it is in 2nd Inversion.

Let's try one more. This can be thought of as a I-V progression.

Exercise 10

The musical notation for Exercise 10 is presented on two staves in 6/8 time. The first staff features a sequence of chords: C, G, C, G, C, G, C, G. The second staff features a sequence of chords: G, C, G, C, G, C, G, C. The melody is composed of eighth and quarter notes, creating a rhythmic pattern that alternates between the two staves.

Can you identify the Root Position voicings and inversions? Go through and do it now, even if you're tempted to just play through it and leave it at that. If you take the time to identify these things it can help you in the long run.

PRACTICE CHALLENGE #3

Easier

- Come up with at least 3 more chord combinations and apply them to the style of the previously covered exercises. They can be random and don't need to be diatonic.

Challenging

- Take those 3 and practice them in all 12 keys. This is a hefty task, but you can be sure that this will put you to practice!

As we continue doing these exercises throughout the different triad and 7th chord qualities, you will begin to see how helpful this kind of practicing can be. It may seem tedious at times, but I guarantee you will feel more confident in navigating your instrument than you ever have before!

Let's move on to the next triad quality: **minor**.

Minor Triads

Formula for a minor triad: Root-b3-5th

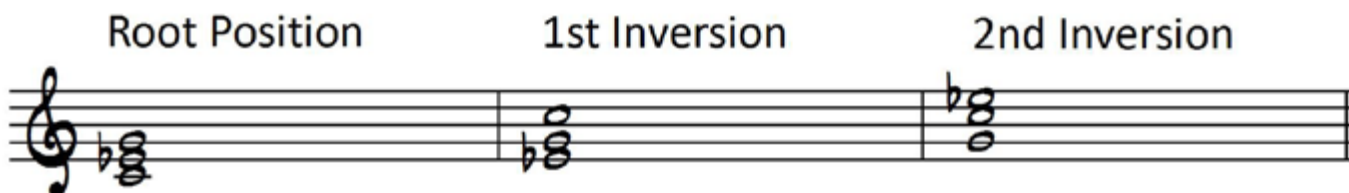
So the only difference between a minor triad and a major triad is the flatted third. Take a look at the chord tones drawn from the natural minor scale.



When you stack these scale degrees on top of each other you get a C minor triad: C-Eb-G.



And here is the minor triad notated in Root Position, 1st Inversion and 2nd Inversion.



Now let's try another one of these exercises! The idea is to make sure you have a handle on the minor triad and its inversions, as well as how to connect them with other minor triad keys. This one goes from a **C minor** triad to a **D minor triad**, just a whole step apart. I'll put the key signature in C minor for demonstration purposes.

Exercise 11

C MIN D MIN C MIN D MIN C MIN D MIN C MIN D MIN

D MIN C MIN D MIN C MIN D MIN C MIN D MIN C MIN

You'll notice that this one is pretty straight-forward as far as inversions go. Because they are only a whole step away from each other, the Root Position C minor is followed by a Root Position D minor and so on and so forth. Nevertheless, I think it can be helpful to see the movement so clearly.

Now let's try another exercise of this sort, except for this time we will be combining **major and minor** triads together. In this case we will use the same progression as Exercise 10, but we will make the F, minor. So the progression will be a I-minor iv progression in the key of C (C-Fmin).

Exercise 12

C F MIN C F MIN C F MIN C F MIN

F MIN C F MIN C F MIN C F MIN C

I find it to be great practice taking short chord progressions and doing exercises like this one, changing the qualities of chords as you go. The more different combinations you can come up with the better!

PRACTICE CHALLENGE #4

Easier

- Come up with at least 3 more chord combinations that combine major and minor triads like in Exercise 12.

Challenging

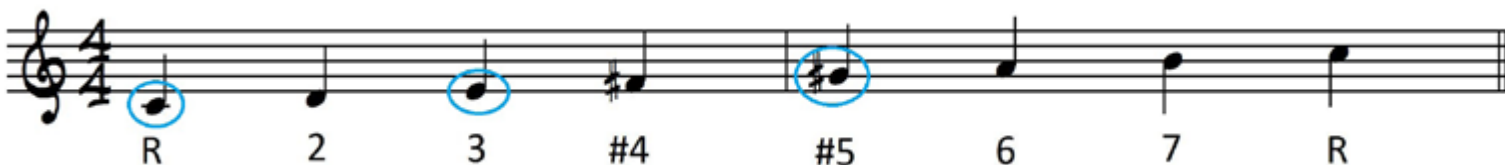
- Take those 3 and practice them in all 12 keys.

The Practice Challenges for our chord studies may seem repetitive as we continue. But remember, I'm calling you to action. I want you to practice, and do something about the information I'm giving you. You got this! I'm rooting for you.

Augmented Triads

Formula for an augmented triad: Root-3rd-#5

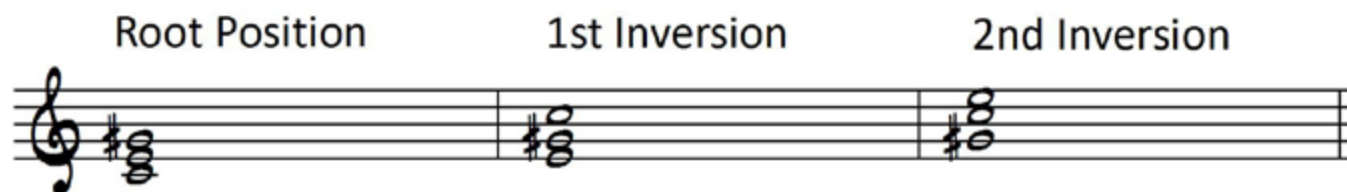
I always think of the augmented triad as being related to the major triad, just with a #5. To demonstrate where we grab these chord tones from, I've notated a **Lydian Augmented scale**, also called a Lydian #5 scale.



When you stack these scale degrees on top of each other you get a C augmented triad: C-E-G#.



And here is the augmented triad notated in Root Position, 1st Inversion and 2nd Inversion.



Now, this triad moves symmetrically. If you move up every chord tone up a major third, the notes automatically rotate to the next inversion. If you play a visual instrument like the piano or guitar you will have especially noticed this. Don't take my word for it, though! Take a look at each inversion and notice that each note move up in major 3rds.

Let's do our exercise now and have the augmented triad move up and down in whole steps. So we will be using a C⁺ to a D⁺ (*+ is the symbol for augmented*).

Exercise 13

The image shows two staves of musical notation in 6/8 time. The first staff contains four measures of music, each starting with a triad labeled above it: C⁺, D⁺, C⁺, D⁺, C⁺, D⁺, C⁺, and D⁺. The notes are written in a way that shows the movement of the triads up in whole steps. The second staff contains four measures of music, each starting with a triad labeled above it: D⁺, C⁺, D⁺, C⁺, D⁺, C⁺, D⁺, and C⁺. The notes are written in a way that shows the movement of the triads down in whole steps.

No too tricky right? I find augmented triads to be on the easier side when doing exercises like these.

But now let's combine these augmented triads with major and minor triads. This is where things start to get interesting in my opinion. For this chord progression we are going to do a **ii-V-I-VI**, which is a popular chord progression in jazz that we will be studying later in this book. So now instead of two chords we are doing four. In the key of C, our chord progression will be **Dmin-G⁺-C-A⁺**.

Exercise 14

The image shows two staves of musical notation for Exercise 14. The first staff contains four measures of music. Above the first measure is the chord label 'D MIN', above the second is 'G+', above the third is 'C', and above the fourth is 'A+'. The second staff also contains four measures of music. Above the first measure is the chord label 'D MIN', above the second is 'G+', above the third is 'C', and above the fourth is 'A+'. The melody consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some accidentals (sharps and naturals) indicating specific pitches.

You may have noticed that this exercise is slightly different from the others. This time we stuck with the order of the chord progression going descending, rather than repeating the last chord in bar 4 and working backward. This just makes more practical sense for our purposes.

PRACTICE CHALLENGE #5

Easier

- Practice Exercise 14 in 6 different keys. One per day of the week, on the seventh day review.

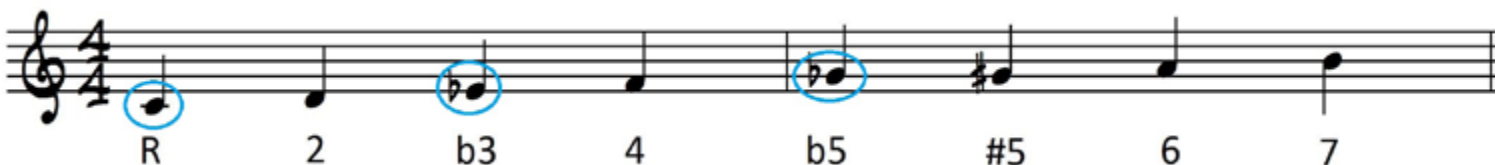
Challenging

- Practice Exercise 14 in all 12 keys. Two keys per six days, review all 12 on the seventh day.

Diminished Triads

Formula for a diminished triad: Root-b3-b5

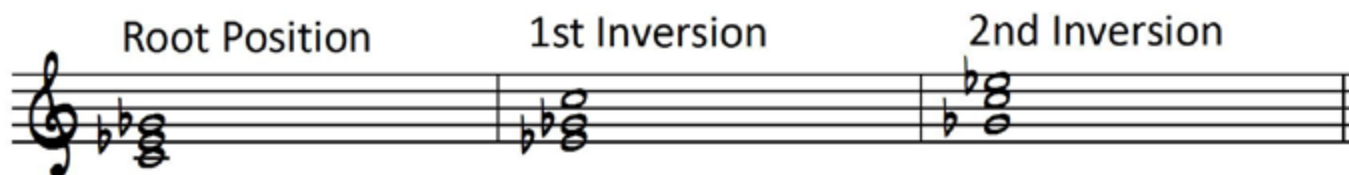
In the same way that I think of the augmented triad being related to the major triad, the diminished triad I think of being related to the minor triad. The only difference between the minor and diminished is the b5.



When you stack these scale degrees on top of each other you get a C diminished triad: C-Eb-Gb.



And here is the diminished triad notated in Root Position, 1st Inversion and 2nd Inversion.



Let's do as we have done before and practice an exercise that runs through two different diminished triads. The more you do stuff like this, the more proficient you will be!

Exercise 15

Exercise 15 musical notation showing two staves of music. The first staff contains four measures with triad quality labels C^{DIM} , D^{DIM} , C^{DIM} , and D^{DIM} above them. The second staff contains four measures with triad quality labels D^{DIM} , C^{DIM} , D^{DIM} , and C^{DIM} above them.

Now let's combine all of the triad quality types together. This will be a I- \sharp idim-ii-V progression: C-C \sharp dim-Dmin-G $^+$.

Exercise 16

Exercise 16 musical notation showing two staves of music. The first staff contains four measures with triad quality labels C, $C^{\sharp DIM}$, D^{MIN} , and G^+ above them. The second staff contains four measures with triad quality labels C, $C^{\sharp DIM}$, D^{MIN} , and G^+ above them.

PRACTICE CHALLENGE #6

Easier

- Review each triad quality type (4) over the course of 4 days. Create your own exercises or use the ones provided in this chapter.

Challenging

- Review each triad quality type over the course of 4 days, by taking exercises 9-16 into at least three different keys from the original.

Let me repeat what I said at the beginning of this triads section: **triads are the foundation of any chord**. So it's incredibly important that you understand how to create the four different qualities, how to play them, and how to combine them together.

The idea is the more you practice these, not only will they become easier, you will learn to navigate your instrument better. This will give you a leg up when it comes to jazz improvisation.

Let's move on to **7th chords**!

7th Chords

One of the characteristics of jazz standards are the lush, colorful chords that populate their harmonies. Jazz musicians often use chords that offer more harmonic information than simple triads. These basic types of chords are called **7th chords**.

What's a 7th chord?

A 7th chord is a triad with the 7th tone of its corresponding scale stacked on top.

Basic formula: Root-3rd-5th-7th (3rd, 5th, or 7th altered depending on quality)

In the same way that triads can be used in musical ways, so can 7th chords. In fact, later in the book you'll discover how the 3rd and the 7th tones of any chord are incredibly important for hearing chord changes in your solos.

So knowing your 7th chords and how to connect them together is important. We will be applying similar exercises that we used with triads to 7th chords as well.

There are 5 qualities of 7th chords: **major 7**, **dominant7**, **minor 7**, **half-diminished**, and **diminished 7**. Let's start with the major 7th.

Major 7 Chords

Formula for a major 7 chord: Root-3rd-5th-7th

Same as a major triad but with the 7th scale degree stacked on top. Pretty simple right? If you know your major scale it's simple to pick out where all of the chord tones come from.



When you stack these scale degrees on top of each other you get a Cmaj7: C-E-G-B.



Of course, there are also inversions to all of the major 7 chord qualities. Because there are four chord tones, we end up having three inversions. Here is the Cmaj7 notated in Root Position, 1st Inversion, 2nd Inversion and 3rd Inversion.



Just to be extra clear, the **3rd Inversion has the 7th in the bass**. If you see the 7th in the bass of a chord or arpeggio, it is in 3rd Inversion.

So let's run an arpeggio exercise like we have done with our triads. This one is a I-IV chord progression in C major: **Cmaj7-Fmaj7**.

Exercise 17

The image shows two staves of musical notation for Exercise 17. The first staff contains four measures of arpeggiated chords: Cmaj7, Fmaj7, Cmaj7, and Fmaj7. The second staff contains four measures of arpeggiated chords: Fmaj7, Cmaj7, Fmaj7, and Cmaj7. The notation is in 4/4 time and uses a treble clef. The chords are written as arpeggios, with the notes of each chord played in sequence across the measures.

If you've been following along since the triad studies, this will be familiar territory by now. You'll notice how these two chords connect quite gracefully. Give this exercise a good practice and make sure you can play it comfortably on your instrument.

We won't do quite as many exercises in this 7th chord chapter, because any of the triad exercises can be applied to these 7th chords. You can look at **Practice Challenges 3-6** in the triads chapter and apply them to each 7th chord quality. For the sake of not being redundant, I'm asking you to go back to those practice challenges at the end of each chord quality.

Let's move on to the next 7th chord quality: **dominant 7**.

Dominant 7 Chords

Formula for a dominant 7 chord: Root-3rd-5th-b7

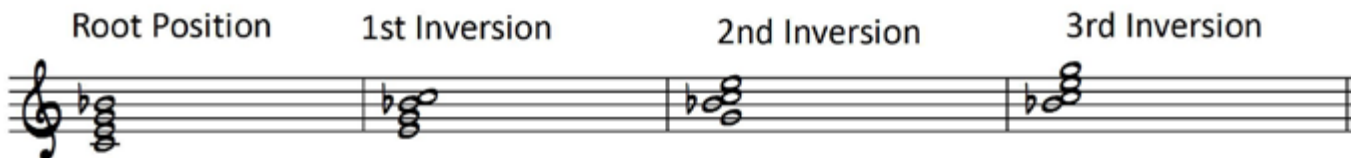
Same as a major 7 chord but with a b7. Dominant 7 chords play a huge role in jazz and the blues so these are important chords to have down solid! This chord comes straight out of the Mixolydian scale.



When you stack these scale degrees on top of each other you get a C7: C-E-G-Bb.



Here is the C7 notated in Root Position, 1st Inversion, 2nd Inversion and 3rd Inversion.



As I said, I'm not going to give you as many exercises for our 7th chords studies. But I do encourage you to apply your dominant 7 chords to practices like Exercise 17. Take any variety of different dominant 7 chords and string them together. The more you practice this, the more familiar you will be with navigating dominant 7 chords on your instrument.

Instead, let's jump ahead to combining major 7 and dominant 7 chords together. This is a simple I-V-I progression. Dominant 7 chords are often used as **tension chords**, meaning they demand a resolution. Starting in bar 5, it descends as a V-I progression.

Exercise 18

Exercise 18 consists of two staves of music in 4/4 time. The first staff contains four measures, each with a C^{MAJ}7 chord followed by a G⁷ chord. The second staff contains four measures, each with a G⁷ chord followed by a C^{MAJ}7 chord. The notes are written in a way that demonstrates the relationship between the two chords.

Remember to refer to some of the Practice Challenges from the triads chapter so you can put these to further practice!

Let's move on to our next 7th chord quality type: **minor 7**.

Minor 7 Chords

Formula for a minor 7 chord: Root-b3-5th-b7

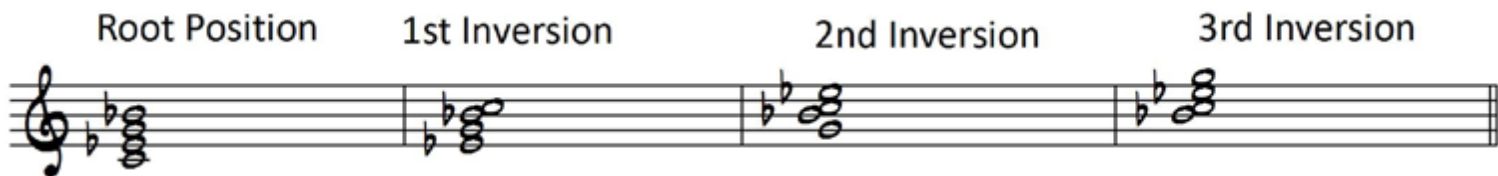
Like the minor triad, the 3rd is flatted. And like the dominant 7 chord, the 7th is flatted. Take a look at the natural minor scale, which is where you can draw these chord tones from.

A diagram of the natural minor scale on a treble clef staff. The notes are: Root (R), 2, b3, 4, 5, b6, b7, and R. The b3 and b7 notes are circled in blue.

When you stack these scale degrees on top of each other, you get a Cmin7: C-Eb-G-Bb.

A diagram of the C minor 7 chord (Cmin7) on a treble clef staff. The notes are C, Eb, G, and Bb.

Here is the Cmin7 notated in Root Position, 1st Inversion, 2nd Inversion and 3rd Inversion.



In Exercise 14 during the triads section, we studied a ii-V-I-VI chord progression using only triads. In this next exercise we are going to use the same chord progression but of course with 7th chords. The V chord will become a dominant 7 chord and the VI chord will become a minor 7 chord (vi).

In the next chapter we are going to study diatonic chord progressions and how to build them, so if the chord progressions we are using in these exercises don't make sense to you right now, don't worry! We will be covering that soon. This progression goes **Dmin7-G7-Cmaj7-Amin7**.

Exercise 19

The image shows two staves of musical notation for Exercise 19. The first staff contains the notes for the first four chords: Dmin7 (D, F, A, C), G7 (G, B, D, F), Cmaj7 (C, E, G, B), and Amin7 (A, C, E, B). The second staff contains the notes for the next four chords: Dmin7 (D, F, A, C), G7 (G, B, D, F), Cmaj7 (C, E, G, B), and Amin7 (A, C, E, B). The notes are written in a sequence that suggests a specific fingering or voicing for each chord.

We only have two more 7th chord qualities left. So make sure you have these chords well practiced by revisiting some of the Practice Challenges in the triads section.

Let's go on to the next 7th chord quality: **half-diminished**.

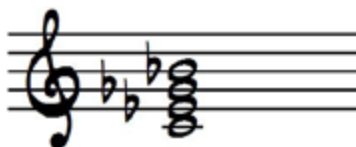
Half-Diminished Chords

Formula for a Half-Diminished chord: Root-b3-b5-b7

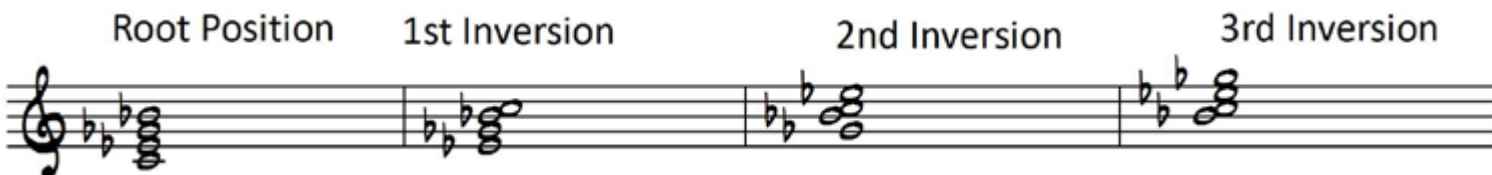
Take a minor 7 chord and flat the 5, and you have what we call a half-diminished chord. This chord is also commonly known as a **minor 7(b5) chord**. We can draw these chord tones from the Locrian scale.



When you stack these scale degrees on top of each other you get a Cmin7(b5): C-Eb-Gb-Bb.



Here is the Cmin7(b5) notated in Root Position, 1st Inversion, 2nd Inversion and 3rd Inversion.



As I've already mentioned before, try replicating some of our previous exercises in the triads section and Exercise 17 on major 7th chords and combine two half-diminished chords together. This is a great practice, especially because it's not often that you would see two half-diminished chords used consecutively.

For this exercise, let's turn Exercise 19 into what we call a **minor ii-V-i-vi**. Essentially we are turning the ii chord and the vi chord into half-diminished chords and the i chord into a minor 7 chord. Again, if you don't understand how chord progressions work, don't worry. We will be covering chord progressions in an upcoming chapter!

Exercise 20

Exercise 20 musical notation (two staves, 4/4 time, key signature of two flats):

Staff 1: $D_{MIN}^{7(b5)}$ G^7 C_{MIN}^7 $A_{MIN}^{7(b5)}$ $D_{MIN}^{7(b5)}$ G^7 C_{MIN}^7 $A_{MIN}^{7(b5)}$

Staff 2: $D_{MIN}^{7(b5)}$ G^7 C_{MIN}^7 $A_{MIN}^{7(b5)}$ $D_{MIN}^{7(b5)}$ G^7 C_{MIN}^7 $A_{MIN}^{7(b5)}$

I think it's a great practice to make small adjustments and alterations to existing exercises! For me, it's interesting to play Exercise 19 and 20 one after each other and observe what notes change the quality of the chord.

Now for one last 7th chord to cover: **diminished 7**.

Diminished 7 Chords

Formula for a Diminished 7 chord: Root-b3-b5-bb7

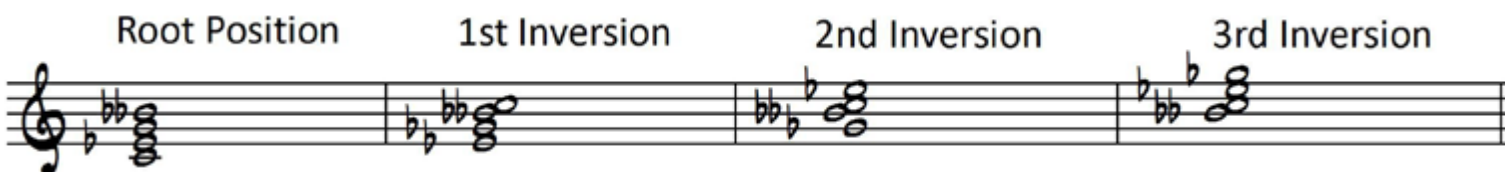
That's right! If you take a half-diminished chord and flat the 7th chord tone twice, you get a fully diminished 7 chord. I suppose it makes the meaning of half-diminished all that more clear. We can draw these chord tones straight out of the Whole-Half Diminished scale.



Mind you, when we spell out the chord, we call it a bb7 not a 6, so in the key of C, it would be a Bbb. When you stack these scale degrees on top of each other you get a Cdim7: C-Eb-Gb-Bbb.



Here is the Cdim7 notated in Root Position, 1st Inversion, 2nd Inversion and 3rd Inversion.



This is our last exercise for our chord studies! Make it count. This time, of course, we are mixing the diminished 7 chord in with other 7th chords. This chord progression is a **I-#dim-ii-V**, similar to Exercise 16 in our triads chapter, but with 7th chords.

Exercise 21

Exercise 21 musical notation showing two staves of music. The first staff contains four measures of music, and the second staff contains four measures. The chords are labeled above the notes: CMAJ⁷, C[#]DIM⁷, DMIN⁷, and G⁷.

PRACTICE CHALLENGE #7

Easier

- Review each 7th chord quality type (5) over the course of 5 days. Create your own exercises or use the ones provided in this chapter.

Challenging

- Review each 7th chord quality type over the course of 5 days, by taking Exercises 17-21 into at least three different keys from the original.

7th Chord Extensions and Alterations

It's important that you understand that many of these 7th chords we just studied can be extended and altered. This is not only important to comprehend if you play a chordal instrument, like a piano or guitar, but it's also important to know as an improviser.

Why you may ask? Throughout your jazz studies, you will most surely come across chords labeled, for example, as a *C7(#11)* or *Bbmin11*. You'll want to know how to construct these chords and how they may influence your note choices as an improviser. First things first, let's go over some definitions to get off on the right foot!

What's a chord extension?

Chord extensions are essentially chord tones that are added above the basic 7th chord structure (R-3rd-5th-7th). The possible extensions are the 9th, 11th, and 13th. These extensions don't replace the R-3rd-5th-7th but are added in addition to achieve a desired sound. However, in some cases, an extended chord may exclude a basic chord tone to avoid dissonance.

The easiest way to understand chord extensions is to think of them as the notes in between the basic structural chord tones: the 2nd, 4th, and 6th.

The 9th is the same as the 2nd, just up an octave.

The 11th is the same as the 4th, up an octave.

The 13th is the same as the 6th, up an octave.

If that doesn't quite make sense right away, hopefully, this visual will help you see what I am talking about.



The notes circled in blue are the 2nd, 4th, and 6th and circled in red are the 9th, 11th, and 13th. Same exact notes, but separated by an octave.

Which extensions can you use on 7th chords?

Let's go through which extensions you can use on different kinds of 7th chords. This is especially important to understand for composing and for chordal accompaniment instruments.

Note that these are **un-altered extensions**. We will go over altered in a second, but it's important to mention because in some cases an altered extension can be used on a chord that would not use an un-altered extension. This will become clear.

9th

The 7th chords it can be added to: Major, dominant, minor, half-diminished.

Formula: R-3rd-5th-7th-9th

Example: Cmaj9



Note: You already know the formulas for all of the 7th chord qualities. To add a 9th to any of these chords, build the basic 7th chord first and then simply add the 9th on top. Easy!

11th

The 7th chords it can be added to: minor, half-diminished, diminished

Rule: the 11th can be added to chords with a b3 in it. Otherwise the 11th would clash with the major 3rd.

Formula: R-3rd-5th-7th-9th-11th

Example: Cmin11



13th

The 7th chords it can be added to: major, dominant, minor.

Formula: R-3rd-5th-7th-9th-13th

Example: C13



Note: 13th chords usually do not include the 11th in the chord.

Now that we've covered chord extensions let's talk about **altered chord tones**. Here's a good definition.

What's an altered chord tone?

An altered chord tone is any functioning chord tone (structural or an extension) that is raised or lowered by a half step to achieve a desired effect. This is often done for voice leading purposes and to achieve some kind of tension and release.

Altered Chord Tones over Major 7ths

Possible alterations: b5, #5, #11, b13.

Note: While the 11th is not used in a major 7 as an un-altered extension, it is used as an altered chord tone, specifically a #11.

Additional Note: The b13 is not very common.

For the sake of being thorough, I think it's important to demonstrate what the difference between a b5 and a #11. If you think about it, they are the same note. In the key of C that would be a Gb/F#. Take a look.



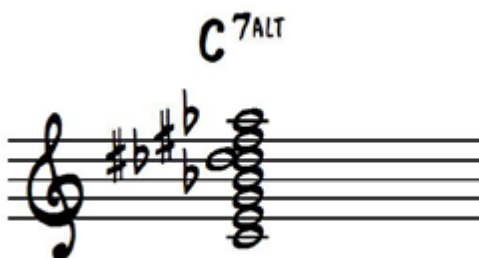
If it isn't obvious to you, the Cmaj7(b5) simply takes the existing perfect 5th and flats it. But the Cmaj7(#11) keeps the perfect 5th and instead adds the extended #11th on top of the chord.

Altered Chord Tones over Dominant 7ths

Possible alterations: b5, #5, b9, #9, #11, b13.

Note: The dominant 7 chord has the most alterations possible. Also, the same as it was with the major 7, the 11th can be used with the dominant 7 as an alteration (#11).

One important chord to understand when it comes to dominant 7ths is the **alt chord**. If you ever see on a piece of sheet music “C7alt” that just means that some or all of the extensions are included in the chord and altered. Jazz musicians can choose to outline all of them, whether playing a chord or improvising, or picking and choose which ones are included.



It may be a lot of notes crunched up together on the staff, and not the easiest to read, but go ahead and try to identify all of the altered extensions in this notated C7alt chord.

Altered Chord Tones over Minor 7ths

Possible alteration: Major 7th

Note: There are those that would alter extensions on a minor 7 chord, but in general it's uncommon and unconventional.

Some would not consider altering the b7 to a natural 7 in a minor 7 chord to be an "alteration." They would consider it a different chord altogether. Technically it's just a minor triad with a major 7 added on top. However, I like to think of it as an alteration.



And that's it! Those are the only 7th chord qualities with alterations. Some of this may seem very un-musical to you, and you would be correct. **This is jazz theory 101.** But trust me, knowing this stuff and being competent will give you a serious leg up on your jazz improvisation!

PRACTICE CHALLENGE #8

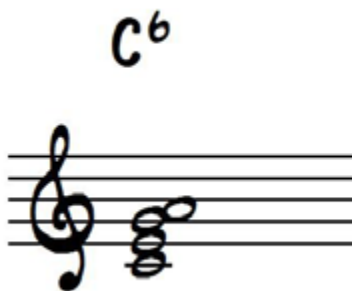
- Go through each one of these chord extensions and alterations and try notating them in at least six different keys. This will help you put to practice some of this information we just covered, and make sure you know how to come up with these chords. It may not be the most fun Practice Challenge so far, but it's good practice!

The 6th and Sus4 Chord

There are two types of chords that we haven't discussed yet that don't fit the description of a 7th chord extension or alteration. Those two are **6th and sus4 chords**. It's important that you understand how to construct these because you will most certainly encounter them in your jazz studies.

In the case of both of these chords, the defining chord tone is replacing an existing chord tone.

In the case of the 6th chord, the 6th is replacing the 7th. So a major 6th chord is spelled: **R-3rd-5th-6th**.

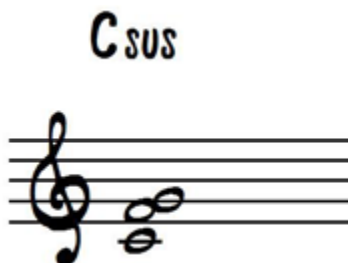


A minor 6 chord is spelled: **R-b3-5th-6th**.



You'll hear the minor 6th replacing a minor 7th chord on various occasions in jazz music. The major 6 is a fairly common replacement for the major 7 and doesn't often affect an improviser's note choices in an extreme way.

In the case of a sus4 chord (suspended), the 4th is replacing the 3rd in the chord. So a regular suspended triad would be spelled: **R-4th-5th**.



Now if we were to make a dominant 7 chord suspended, which you will see from time to time, it would be spelled **Root-4th-5th-b7**.



It's important that you have a good handle on all of these chords and understand how to construct them. The more you understand harmony and chord construction, the better off your jazz improvisation will be. I guarantee it!

Now, let's tie our scale and chord studies together with some chord/scale theory. This is the next logical step in this process and will help you understand how these things are related.

Go ahead, the next chapter awaits!

C H A P T E R 3

Scales and Their Relationship to Chords

Remember when I told you in the Scales chapter that I cringe when people ask me “What scale do I play over a... (dominant 7 chord)?” Well, in this chapter I’ll be flirting with everything I usually preach against!

To recap: when it comes to playing jazz, using scales to navigate chord changes is not the way to go. In order to learn jazz language it needs to be listened to, mimicked, and learned primarily by ear.

Scales are great for:

- » Learning your instrument.
- » Improving your technique.
- » Conceptualizing musical ideas.

However, it’s that last one (conceptualizing) that opens up the door for using scales in relationship to chords.

It can be incredibly useful to understand what scales you can use over different kinds of chords. Why? Because these represent the **pitch collections** that can be used as note choices.

I like thinking of scales as *pitch collections* because it's more visual. When I think of the word "scales" I think of a series of progressing notes going up or down in pitch. When I think of pitch collections, I think of a palette of notes I have to choose from in order to construct melodies. So when it comes to jazz improvisation, **think about scales as pitch collections.**

If you know the pitch collections that you can use over different kinds of chords, it can be a helpful tool, not for making melodies, but for knowing what notes are going to "work" and which ones "won't work".

I put those in parenthesis because when it comes to jazz there is no such thing as wrong notes. You can play any note you want as long as you can effectively resolve it to a diatonically stable note.

So here is a list of pitch collections (scales) that you can use over 7th chords.

It's important to note that I am not listing every scale under the sun that you can super-impose over different kinds of chords. I don't wish to go that far because I'm more interested in having you do something musical with these scales. I'm going to list the basic scales that you can apply to different kinds of 7th chords. I will go a bit further in depth on major pentatonic scales just a little further ahead.

For each one of these I'm not going to spell out the scale unless I haven't gone over it already. Refer back to the Scales chapter if you need to refresh yourself on how to spell any of these scales.

To make this section as musical as possible, I will be giving you a lick for each of these chords that use notes from these pitch collections.

Un-altered 7th Chords

Major 7, 9, 11, 13

Scale: Major

Exercise 22

Major 7 Lick

C_{MAJ}⁷



Minor 7, 6, 9, 11, 13

Scales: Natural minor, Dorian minor

Note: Dorian would best suite a minor 6 chord

Exercise 23

Dorian Minor Lick

D_{MIN}⁷



Dominant 7, 9, 13, sus

Scale: Mixolydian

Exercise 24

Mixolydian Lick

C⁷



Half-Diminished

Scales: Locrian, Locrian #2

I didn't go over Locrian #2 which is the 6th mode of the melodic minor, so I'll spell it out now. It's exactly what it sounds like: a Locrian scale but with a raised 2 (the b2 now becomes a natural 2).

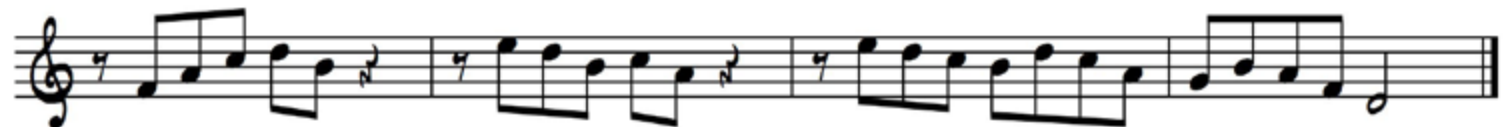
Locrian #2



Exercise 25

Locrian Lick

B_{MIN}^{7(b5)}



Diminished 7

Scale: Whole Half Diminished

Exercise 26

Diminished Lick



Altered 7th Chords

Major 7(b5/#11)

Scale: Lydian

For this exercise, I'm going to use a Cmaj7(#11) chord. Since the Lydian mode works over this chord, what is the parent scale? If you said G major you would be correct!

Exercise 27

Lydian Lick



Major 7(#5)

Scale: Lydian Augmented (or Lydian #5)

We haven't gone over the Lydian Augmented scale yet. It's pretty simple though. You simply raise the 5th on the Lydian scale. Here it is written according to the parent scale of C major.

Lydian Augmented



For this next exercise I'm going to notate in C for the sake of clarity. I'm going to use Exercise 27 a reference, and copy the rhythm and the general melodic direction. However, I'm going to change some notes around to make it fit the chord better. This is a great example of taking a melodic idea and reshaping it to fit a different context.

Exercise 28

Lydian #5 Lick



For observation sake, go back to Exercise 27, play it, and then play 28 to compare and contrast.

Minor(maj7)

Scale: Melodic Minor

Exercise 29

Melodic Minor Lick

C MIN (MAJ7)



Dominant 7(#11)

Scale: Lydian Dominant

Exercise 30

Lydian Dominant Lick

C 7(#11)



This is a rather quirky lick, but it's a lot of fun to play. Notice that it almost spans two octaves. If this is a challenge for the range of your instrument, great! If need be, see how you can adjust it to make it work for you.

Dominant 7 (b9, #9, #11, b13)

Scales: Altered scale, Whole Half Diminished.

Note that the Whole Half Diminished would not be used on a b13/#5 chord.

Exercise 31

Altered Lick



PRACTICE CHALLENGE #9

Easier

- For each chord listed, create your own lick basing them off of the corresponding scales. One per chord type. Notate them or record them, or both.

Challenging

- Take each lick that you compose and bring it through all 12 keys.

How to Use Major and Minor Pentatonic Scales

I mentioned in the Scales chapter and earlier in this chapter that I would go over major and minor pentatonic scales in detail. The reason I am singling out these scales is because I believe in the right hands, they can be used in very musical ways. Additionally, I find that many musicians only use them in very limited contexts but don't realize that you can apply them to a variety of different chord types.

So I want to close off this chapter about scales and their relationships to chords with a lesson on major and minor pentatonic scales.

What's a pentatonic scale?

A pentatonic scale is a musical scale with 5 notes (penta) per octave. The two most common are the major and minor pentatonic.

Check out a C major pentatonic scale.



The formula for a major pentatonic (in reference to a major scale) is: **R-2nd-3rd-5th-6th**.

You can easily think of the major pentatonic in relation to the major scale. Essentially leave out the 4th and 7th of the major scale and you have a major pentatonic scale.

And like all major scales, it has what we call a **relative minor**. We'll discuss this a little more in an upcoming chapter, but essentially for any major quality scale there is a relative minor that shares the exact same notes. This would be the Aeolian mode from a major scale, and the **minor pentatonic scale** has that same relationship with the major pentatonic.

If you want to create a minor pentatonic from a major pentatonic scale, start on the 5th scale degree (the 6th scale degree of a major scale).



The formula for a minor pentatonic (in reference to the natural minor scale) would be: **R-b3-4th-5th-b7**.

You can think about the minor pentatonic as a natural minor scale without the 2nd and b6 scale degrees.

The other thing to recognize is that you can start the minor or major pentatonic **on any note of the scale**. It's all the same scale just re-arranged, no different from how the major modes work. In other words, if I want to play an Amin7 chord I can play a C major pentatonic (C would be b3 of the minor pentatonic). Or I can start the minor pentatonic on the 4th, 5th, or b7.

It's pretty self-explanatory, but I'll demonstrate so you can get the visual.

For our sake let's refer to these "modes" of the minor pentatonic in term of what scale degree they represent in the natural minor scale. You'll see what I mean.

Minor pentatonic starting on b3



Minor pentatonic starting on 4th



Minor pentatonic starting on 5th



Minor pentatonic starting on b7



I show you all of this so plainly because we are now going to go over **what different kinds of chords** you can apply the major and minor pentatonic scale to. Depending on the chord, sometimes you may want to think of it in terms of starting the scale on the root. Other times, you won't need to.

Again, I want to go over this because too often musicians don't use the minor and major pentatonic scales to their full potential. They only get a fraction of the mileage they could get out of it! The goal here is to be informed on how you can use these scales and how to make them as musical as possible.

I'm going to show you different chords you can use the **A minor pentatonic or C major pentatonic** over. Now keep in mind, I may say you can play an A minor pentatonic over such and such a chord, but since A minor and C major they are relative to each other you can think of it as either one. Let's go over **9 ways you can use the pentatonics**.

1. Root minor chords

This is the first of the obvious uses of the minor pentatonic. This one makes a lot of sense right? It's a minor scale with 5 notes so playing this scale over a minor scale is going to make sense. When I say **root** minor chords, I mean that the root of the chord is the same root of the scale. So you can play an **A minor pentatonic over an Amin7 (or just Am) chord**.



2. Root Dominant 7 Chords

An **A minor pentatonic** can be played over an **A7 chord**. This is most commonly applied in a blues situation. The scale does skip the 3rd of A7(C#), which would spell out the difference between a minor and a dominant chord. Regardless, this grouping of notes works out well for a bluesy sound.

A⁷



3. The relative major chord

I've already mentioned this, but I'll reiterate. The A minor pentatonic scale is really the same as a C major pentatonic scale, only starting on an A note. In a musical situation, what note you start on doesn't really matter. This is only just a way to conceptualize it. I have it notated as a C major pentatonic (or and A minor pentatonic starting on the b3).

C^{MAJ}7



4. The minor ii chord of the relative major

The next several examples deal with understanding how 7th chords harmonize with the major scale. This is exactly what we will be going over in the next chapter. If you don't understand this yet, you can either skip ahead and read up on that, or check this out now and it will make more sense later.

In this case, we would be playing a C major (or A minor) pentatonic scale over **D minor 7**. More accurately, you could play a **Dmin9** or a **Dmin11**, since both of those extensions are hit in the C major pentatonic. Of course, you could also just play a D minor pentatonic over a Dmin7 chord. I have this notated as a C major pent starting on the 2nd or an A minor pent starting on the 4th depending on how you look at it.

D_{MIN}7



5. The major IV chord of the relative major

If we are thinking in the key of C major, the IV chord is **F major 7**. Think in terms of the major scale: C-D-E-F-G-A-B-C. The 6th note of the F major scale is played in the A minor pentatonic, so if you wanted to be more specific, you could play an Fmaj13 chord. I have this notated as an A minor pentatonic.

F_{MAJ}7



6. The V7sus chord of the relative major

In the key of C this would be a G7sus. You could just play a regular V dominant chord, but since the major and relative minor pentatonic emphasizes the sus4, it would be appropriate to think of it this way. In fact, it would be more accurate to play a G13sus chord since the 6th is also played.

G¹³_{SUS}



You could play a C major or A minor pentatonic over any of the chords in the key center of C major, but for some there are better options. The most obvious one is playing an E minor pentatonic over the iii chord (Emin7).

But the one that deserves a little bit more attention is the **vii half diminished chord (Bmin7b5)**. This chord is also thought of as the ii chord in the relative minor (A minor), but the A minor pentatonic doesn't highlight the most important note in that chord: the flat 5 (F).

7. The ii minor pentatonic over the vii chord

The minor pentatonic scale that would highlight that b5 is the **D minor pentatonic scale**, therefore this is a better option to play over this chord. If you would prefer, think about it as playing a minor pentatonic a minor 3rd up from a half-diminished chord.

B_{MIN} 7(b5)



8. Minor pentatonic a half step down from a major 7(b5)

This example is not related to the key center as the previous have been. This is a great option for organizing a grouping of notes to play over this chord. In this particular case we are playing an **A minor pentatonic scale over a Bbmaj7(b5) chord**. Why? Because the scale starts on the 7th of Bb major and the pentatonic highlights the most important note in this chord: **the flat 5 (E)**.

B^b_{MAJ} 7(b5)



9. Minor pentatonics over a ii-V-I

We will go over chord progressions in detail in upcoming chapters, but I think it's worthwhile to show you how you can use pentatonics over more than one chord. A **ii-V-I** is an important chord progression in jazz and other styles of music, so I will use it as an example.

Take a look and play through this exercise.

Exercise 32



In this exercise there are 3 minor pentatonic scales being used:

D_{min}7: A minor pentatonic.

G⁷_{alt}: A# (or Bb) minor pentatonic.

C_{maj}7(#11): B minor pentatonic.



They move up chromatically, up one scale and down the next. In this case, the I chord has an altered extension (#11).

We've already gone over how the A minor pentatonic works over a Dmin7, and in this case, we are starting the scale on D. We've also already covered the concept of playing a minor pentatonic scale a half step down from a maj7(b5) chord.

The new member to the group here is the **A# pentatonic over the G7alt chord**. You can think of this as just playing a minor pentatonic a **minor third up from the root of a given dominant chord**. Essentially you are hitting all of the possible alterations in a dominant 7 chord (#9, b9, #11, #5). It may sound a little bit "out" but when you resolve to the Cmaj7(b5) it has a really nice sound.

I won't give you a specific Practice Challenge for pentatonic scales, but I would encourage you to explore them and try to work them into your improvisational approach. These scales can be utilized in a musical way if handled correctly, so go for it and have fun with them!

CHAPTER 4

Chord Progressions

Chord Progressions

Do you remember the Jazz Improv Rule I gave you at the beginning of the book?

The Jazz Improv Rule:

To become a better jazz improviser, you need to understand jazz harmony.

I think it's worth repeating because there is so much truth in it. The best jazz improvisers, though they may not be thinking about it consciously while they're playing, understand how harmony works. They know how it functions and moves.

So far we have studied scales and chords. We've learned how to construct them and have applied different technical exercises and musical applications to them. We've also tied them together and discovered how scales can be used as pitch collections over different chord types.

Now it's time to take a look at **chord progressions**. This is the next logical topic to cover in our jazz improv studies. We'll be looking at how chord progressions are created, which ones you should be most familiar with, and some important jazz song forms to know.

Understanding chord progressions and how they work is pivotal for becoming a better jazz musician. Here we go!

Harmonizing Scales with 7th Chords

Something important for all musicians (especially in jazz) to understand is that you can take any scale and harmonize it with chords. This is done by identifying the notes of a scale and then building chords off of them using only notes within that scale. You can do this using triads and you can do this using 7th chords. Since 7th chords are so common in jazz we will be focusing on them.

Now you may be wondering...

Why is this important?

- » **It helps us understand how chord progressions work.** In jazz standards, we see a lot of moving harmony going on. For example: ii-V-I's and I-vi-ii-V-I's. It's important to understand how we come up with these chord progressions.
- » **It helps us identify how chords can be related by a consonant scale.** What does a Dbmaj7 and an Ab7 have in common? In a diatonic situation they share the same parent scale and key center.
- » **It helps us become better composers.** Understanding how diatonic chord progressions are formed is a very important cornerstone to establish **if you want to write your own music.**
- » All in all, if we want to understand how chord progressions work from the ground up, learning how to harmonize scales is an excellent starting point.

How to Harmonize a Major Scale with 7th Chords

Let's start with the major scale, and to remain consistent with the rest of the book, let's work with the C major scale. You already know it well, but here it is again.



Here are the 2 big questions:

1. How do I build 7th chords off of the notes in the C major scale?
2. How do I know which quality of chord each note will represent? Major, minor, dominant, half-diminished, diminished?

I'm going to teach you this in a slightly unorthodox way: **I'm going to give you the answers first and then explain how I got them.** Take a look at the chart on the following page.

MAJOR DIATONIC SERIES OF 7TH CHORDS

C	D	E	F	G	A	B
Maj7	Min7	Min7	Maj7	Dom7	Min7	Halfdim
Cmaj7	Dmin7	Emin7	Fmaj7	G7	Amin7	Bmin7(b5)
I	ii	iii	IV	V	vi	vii(b5)

Black= the notes in the C major scale.

Red= the quality of the chord built on top of the given scale degree.

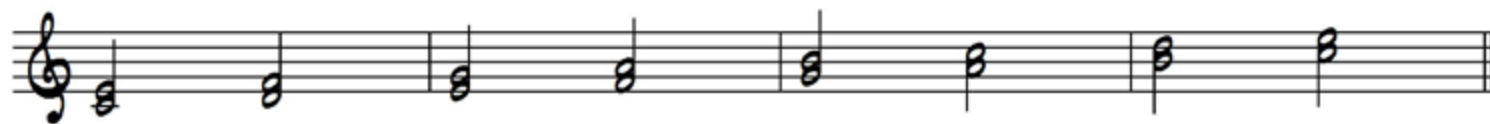
Blue= the full chord name pertaining to the root note and the chord quality.

Green= the Roman numeral representing the scale degree.

For the Roman numerals the number represents the scale degree. A capital numeral means it is either a major 7 or dominant 7 chord, and a lowercase numeral means it is a minor chord. This is where chord progressions like the ii-V-I are derived from (more on that coming up).

You could just take my word for it. The *Major Diatonic Series of 7th Chords* chart says that the IV chord is a major 7 chord, so therefore the IV chord in the key of C is Fmaj7. But of course I want you to understand how to harmonize the major scale with 7th chords, not just memorize the chart.

So let's go back some steps and see how we got these answers. We need to create 7th chords out of each of these notes in the major scale. Therefore we need to stack a 3rd, 5th, and 7th on top of each note. For starters, let's just stack thirds on top of each of the notes in the C major scale.



The question you may ask is ***how do I know what kind of third to stack on top of the root? Is it a minor 3rd or a major 3rd?***

The rule is: whatever note you stack on top has to be diatonic to the scale. In other words, if the note you stack on top is not in the C major scale (ex. Eb), it would be incorrect. If the note you stack on top is in the scale, it will be correct. Make sense?

You may also notice that once you stack the proper 3rd (E) on top of the first note in the scale (C), you can just stack thirds on top of every other note by just walking up the scale starting on E (E-F-G-A-B-C-D-E).

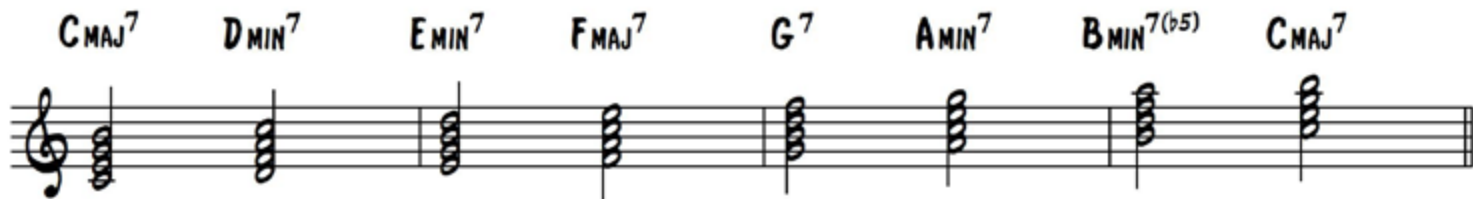
Now let's stack the 5^{ths} on top of the 3^{rds}.



You should already know the formulas for all of the different types of triads, as we discussed this in the previous chapter on chord construction. If you go through each one of these triads and identify the intervals, you will discover that the triad qualities are as I have represented them. Go for it, check me on it!

The same rule applies to adding the 5^{ths}. As long as the 5th is diatonic to the scale, you are in the clear.

Of course, there is only one more note to stack on top of these triads to make them 7th chords. Let's stack the 7ths on top of these 5ths.



Go ahead and confirm these chords for yourself. Do the intervals accurately represent the chords symbols I've labeled? You'll notice that the vii chord is now a half diminished, while when it was a triad it was diminished. This is because the 7th in only flatted once and not twice.

So now scroll back to the Major Diatonic Series of 7th Chords chart. Everything checks out. It's important that you memorize this chart, as this is a fundamental piece of knowledge that you need to know.

How to Harmonize Minor Scales with 7th Chords

We will discuss some important chord progressions in jazz that we can draw from the diatonic series, but let's first go over harmonizing minor scales with 7th chords. I will cover **natural minor**, **harmonic minor** and **melodic minor**.

First, let's harmonize the **natural minor**.



I would encourage you, having seen how to harmonize the major scale to see if you can do it yourself. But I'll skip showing you how to stack the 3rds and 5ths and just demonstrate the 7th chords.



Hopefully this is fairly self-explanatory. Again, notice how every note that has been stacked is true to the natural minor scale.

Now let's go over the **harmonic minor scale**.



As you should already know, the difference between a natural minor and a harmonic minor is the natural 7. It's a small change, but this will most certainly result in some different chord qualities than seen in the natural minor harmonization.



Keep in mind that wherever a B is stacked in a chord it must be natural and not flat because we are dealing with the harmonic minor scale. It's interesting to see how just that note change alters four of the chord qualities.

Moving on, let's take a look at the **melodic minor scale**.



Remember that the difference between a natural minor and a melodic minor is a natural 6 and 7. As I suggested with the harmonic minor, see if you can come up with the 7th chords for the melodic minor yourself.



So there you go! Harmonizing major and the basic minor scales with 7th chords should no longer be a mystery.

But since one of the primary reasons I am showing you this is to help you understand how chord progressions are formed, it would be important to show you the **Minor Diatonic Series of 7th Chords**. I'll show it to you and then explain.

MINOR DIATONIC SERIES OF 7TH CHORDS						
C	D	Eb	F	G	A	Bb
Min7	Halfdim	Maj7	Min7	Dom7	Halfdim	Dom7
Cmin7	Dmin7(b5)	Emaj7	Fmin7	G7	Amin7(b5)	Bb7
I	ii(b5)	III	iv	V	vi(b5)	VII

The Minor Diatonic Series of 7th Chords is based off of the natural minor scale. However, the **V chord is borrowed from the harmonic and melodic minor harmonization**. Instead of it being a minor 7 it is turned into a dominant 7 chord. Why? The V chord in traditional harmony is almost always a dominant 7 chord. The V often resolves to the I chord and therefore the V in the harmonic and melodic minor is appropriate in this case. In the same way, the **vi chord is borrowed from the melodic minor**.

Understanding how to harmonize major and minor scales is really important for understanding jazz harmony,

Personally, I like to be thorough. That's what this book is all about. Starting from the ground up so that you are set up for the best success possible in your jazz improvisation.

In this next section we are going to go over important chord progressions you should know as a jazz musician. They are all derived from the Major and Minor Diatonic Series of 7th chords. Once you have this concept down, you've unlocked the door to an incredible world in jazz improvisation.

Important Jazz Chord Progressions

Let's start identifying some important chord progressions you will need to know. You will need to be quite familiar with these, because these will present themselves time and time again, in some shape or form throughout your jazz studies.

For each one of these progressions, you will need to refer to either the Major or the Minor Diatonic Series of 7th chords charts I provided for you in the last section. Those charts indicate how we arrived at each chords function, quality, and letter name.

The Basic Chord Progressions

ii-V-I

This is by far the most commonly seen chord progression in jazz. You'll want to know this one inside and out, forwards and backwards.

Long ii-V-I

The image shows a musical staff in 4/4 time, divided into three measures. Each measure contains a single chord, represented by a slash (/). Above the staff, the chords are labeled: D^{MIN}7, G⁷, and C^{MAJ}7. Below the staff, the Roman numerals are labeled: ii, V, and I.

We're in the key of C major (Concert C, Bb, or Eb, depending on your instrument). The Roman Numerals are included underneath the staff.

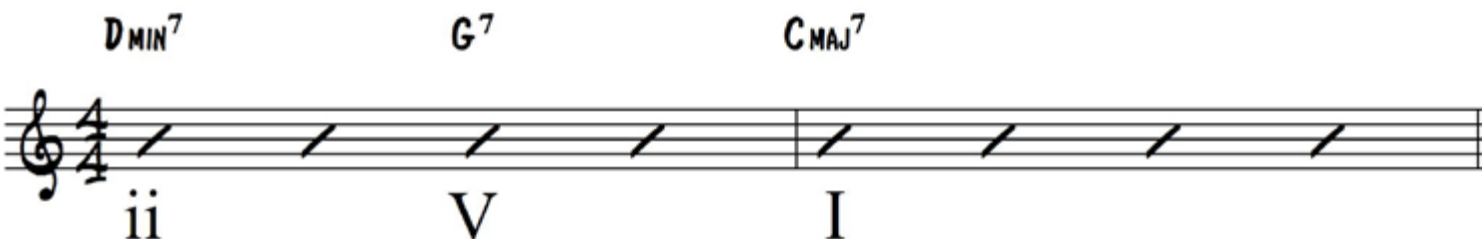
If you look back at the Major Diatonic Series of 7th Chords you'll confirm that the ii chord in C is Dmin7, the V chord is G7, and the I chord of course, is Cmaj7. This chord progression will be pivotal for you to recognize and understand. I call it a "long" ii-V-I because each chord lasts one bar.

Now, I want to keep things musical. **So I'm going to give you licks to practice for each of these chord progressions.** This is good jazz language for you to work on. When we are done with this chapter on chord progressions, we will be moving on to Part 2, which is all about learning jazz language. So these will be good exercises to start getting you headed in the right direction.

Exercise 33



Short ii-V-I



This is what I call a short ii-V-I, which means the ii and the V chords last only **two beats** each, and the I chord lasts **4 beats**. Jazz is packed full of both long and short ii-V-I's.

From an improviser's standpoint, whether a ii-V-I is long or short makes a difference. If a ii-V-I is short you will have to react to the chord changes more quickly. If it's long you get two extra beats during the ii and V chords.

Exercise 34



Minor ii-V-i

The minor ii-V-I is the same concept as the major ii-V-I. Go back to the Minor Diatonic Series of 7th chord and you'll see what I mean.

Long minor ii-V-i



The minor ii-V-i come up often in a jazz context. In fact, you'll constantly see a combination of major and minor ii-V-i's in hundreds of jazz standards. These are some of the most common chord progressions you will come across, so make sure you recognize them and understand how they work.

Let's take a look at a minor ii-V-i lick.

Exercise 35



Short minor ii-V-i



The same as the short major ii-V-I, the short minor ii-V-i has the ii and the V chord only lasting for 2 beats each. Again, as an improviser the adjustment is that you will need to respond to the chord changes quicker.

Exercise 36



I-vi-ii-V

The I-vi-ii-V chord progression is another common one you need to know. Most notably, but certainly not limited to, you will see this progression in song forms such as “rhythm changes” which we will cover soon.

Once again I will encourage you to reference the Major Diatonic Series of 7th chords, so you can clarify the origin of the chord changes.

Long I-vi-ii-V

A musical staff in 4/4 time, treble clef, showing a four-measure progression. The first measure is labeled C^{MAJ}7 and I below the staff. The second measure is labeled A⁷ A^{MIN}7 and vi or VI below the staff. The third measure is labeled D^{MIN}7 and ii below the staff. The fourth measure is labeled G⁷ and V below the staff. Each measure contains a whole note chord symbol and a whole note with diagonal slashes representing the rhythm.

You’ll notice that I notated an A⁷ above the A^{MIN}7. Both of these chords represent the vi chord. If you look at the Major Diatonic Series of 7th Chords chart, you’ll note that the diatonically correct quality of the vi chord would be a minor 7.

However, jazz musicians often turn this chord into a dominant 7 chord. Why? It allows for some more colorful voice leading. We’ll talk about voice leading more in Part 2 of this book. But remember how we talked about the relative major and minor earlier?

Remember that the C^{MAJ}7 and the A^{MIN}7 have mostly the same notes in them.

C^{MAJ}7: C-E-G-B

A^{MIN}7: A-C-E-G

In fact, the only different note between the two is the A in the A^{MIN}7, which is the 6th in the key of C. In other words, they more or less sound the same except for the root.

One way to offer more distinction and more voice leading is to make the vi chord a dominant 7 chord (VI). This adds the C[#] (3rd of A⁷) into the mix. This is something you should take note of as a common substitution in jazz.

In this next lick, I’m going to add the I chord at the end to make a smooth resolution from the V chord.

Exercise 37



Short I-vi-ii-V



The short I-vi-ii-V in general is more common than the long I-vi-ii-V. The vi chord is often thrown into a progression as a connector from the I to the ii. Therefore, learning jazz language over short I-vi-ii-V's is important.

Exercise 38



Minor i-vi-ii-V

Now let's bring this progression into the minor. Refer to the Minor Diatonic Series of 7th chords. You'll see this in many jazz standards as well.

Long minor i-vi-ii-V

The image shows a musical staff in 4/4 time, C minor (two flats). The progression consists of four measures, each containing a whole note chord represented by a slash. The chords are labeled above and below the staff:

- Measure 1: **C_{MIN}⁷** (labeled **i** below)
- Measure 2: **A_{MIN}^{7(b5)}** (labeled **vi** below)
- Measure 3: **D_{MIN}^{7(b5)}** (labeled **ii** below)
- Measure 4: **G⁷** (labeled **V** below)

The long minor i-vi-ii-V is less common than the short minor i-vi-ii-V which we will go over in a second. However, it is just as important to master this chord progression in its longer form.

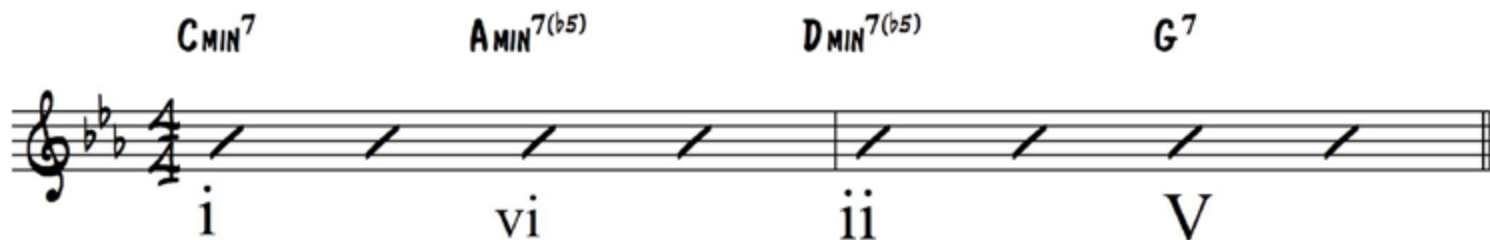
Remember that the vi chord in the minor diatonic series is being borrowed from the melodic minor harmonization of 7th chords. Therefore it is a half diminished chord. The challenge of this progression is learning how to improvise over two half diminished chords in a row.

Exercise 39



I've added the minor i chord to the end of this phrase to achieve the resolution from the V chord. This particular lick riffs off of a set rhythmic pattern and adjusts with the chord changes. This is a great technique to use in your jazz improvisation.

Short minor i-vi-ii-v



Here is the more common of the two. You'll see this progression happen in jazz standards when a minor ii-V-i is repeated more than once. The vi chord is acting as a connector between the I and the ii.

Exercise 40



I notated the G7 as “alt” because if you look at it, the Eb is the b13, and the Bb is the #9.

It should be made clear that if you ever look at a lead sheet and see a plain 7th chord written, this does not mean you have to play only unaltered notes. Quite the contrary! Great jazz musicians are constantly adding extensions and alterations to chords within progressions. **The idea is to know the rules, but then break them.** Know what you “can” and “cannot” do, but go out there and make some music!

These are what I consider to be the **basic chord progressions**. Sure, there are others, but these are foundational. You need to know these forwards and backward:

ii-V-I (long and short)

Minor ii-V-I (long and short)

I-vi-ii-V (long and short)

Minor i-vi-ii-V (long and short)

Common Substitutions, Alternatives, and Add-ons

I think it's important that we go over a handful of important substitutions, alternatives and add-ons to the basic chord progressions.

The basic chord progressions are foundational, but they are just scratching the surface. While I won't be going over every possibility, I'll cover some key ones that you should be in the know about.

iii Replaces the I

In jazz, you will often see the iii chord replacing the I chord. For example, in the key of C, a Cmaj7 is replaced by an Emin7.



Let's continue working on some licks to go along with these chord progressions. I think it's important to see how these play out musically, and I'll give you a great Practice Challenge at the end of this chapter.

Exercise 41



#i Diminished Replaces the VI

A classic substitution is the #i diminished for the dominant VI chord. Most often this is seen in the context of a I-VI-ii-V progression. But when you sub the #i diminished for the VI it becomes: I-#idim-ii-V.



A musical staff in 4/4 time showing a I-#idim-ii-V progression. The chords are labeled above the staff: C^{MAJ7}, C^{#DIM7}, D^{MIN7}, and G⁷. Below the staff, the Roman numerals I, #idim, ii, and V are written. The staff contains four measures, each with a slash indicating a whole rest.

Let's try out a lick over this progression. Remember, I am adding the I chord at the end to make for a good resolution.

Exercise 42



A musical staff in 4/4 time showing a lick over the progression I-#idim-ii-V-I. The chords are labeled above the staff: C^{MAJ7}, C^{#DIM7}, D^{MIN7}, G^{7(b9)}, and C^{MAJ7}. The staff contains five measures of eighth-note and quarter-note runs.

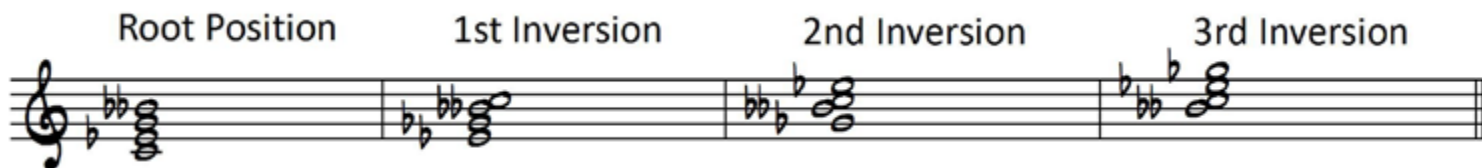
Why is the #i diminished a good substitution for the dominant VI chord?

I'm glad you asked! Remember in the Scales and Their Relationship to Chords section I said that you could play a Half Whole diminished scale over an altered dominant?

This plays right into that same concept. Let's backtrack for a second and discuss the nature of diminished 7th chords.

You may remember in the Scales chapter how we talked about the diminished scale being **symmetrical**. Well, so are the chord tones of a diminished 7th.

Let's review and look at the different inversions of a diminished 7 chord.



These will be familiar if you have been following along since the Chords chapter. Check out this important rule:

The Diminished 7 Symmetry Rule:

Every chord tone in a diminished 7 chord can be moved up or down in **minor thirds** to create another diminished 7 inversion.

Take a look at the Root Position diminished 7. Trace each note in the chord and move them up a minor 3rd. If you do this correctly, you will see it perfectly creates a 1st inversion diminished 7.

I know this can be confusing, so make sure you take the time to pull out your instrument and do this if you don't already understand.

It's important for you to understand the symmetrical movement of diminished 7th chords for you to understand this next rule.

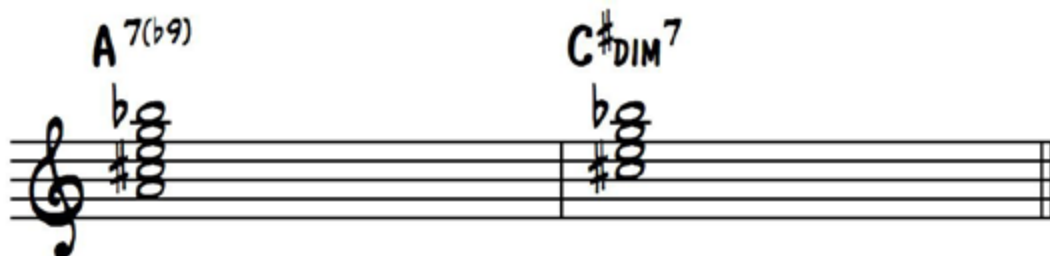
The Dominant 7 and Diminished 7 Rule:

A diminished 7 chord can replace an altered dominant 7 chord (commonly b9 or #9) when the root of the diminished 7 is a half-step above the root (b9) of the altered dominant 7, a major 3rd, perfect 5th, or minor 7th.

Let me explain in further detail.

When a diminished 7 replaces a dominant 7 chord, it implies that the dominant 7 is altered in some way.

Let's look at an A7(b9) (the VI in C major) and a C#dim7 (#idim in C major), side by side so we can compare the notes.



A7(b9): A-C#-E-G-Bb

C#dim7: C#-E-G-Bb

Notice the difference? The only note that doesn't exist in both is A, which is the root of the VI chord.

Now consider The Dominant 7 and Diminished 7 Rule again. We know that a diminished 7 chord moves symmetrically in minor 3rds to create new inversions. But if you think about it, you can also label those inversions diminished 7 chords with an entirely different root.

For example, a C#dim7 chord can have four different bass notes according to the Root Position and inversions.

C#-E-G-Bb

All four of the notes are separated by minor 3rds, just like the rule states. But because these chords move symmetrically, we can label them as different diminished chords, rather than inversions.

C#dim7-Edim7-Gdim7-Bbdim7

Now you may not realize it yet, but this has HUGE implications.

If you think about it even further you will realize that there are only 3 possible diminished 7th chords you can play. What!?

You can label them however you want, but ultimately they are all just inversions of other diminished 7 chords.

Let me spell it out for you. Here are the 3 possible diminished 7 chords, in all of their different labeling.

1. Cdim7-Ebdim7-Gbdim7-Adim7
2. C#dim7-Edim7-Gdim7-Bbdim7
3. Ddim7-Fdim7-Abdim7-Bdim7

The first row of diminished 7th chords are all the same chord. The second row of diminished 7th chord are all the same chord. The third row of diminished 7th chords are all the same chord.

Now count up all of the different roots listed: **12**. That's all 12 keys.

I don't know about you, but this is quite phenomenal to me! **Because this also means I can take any altered dominant 7 chord and substitute a diminished 7 chord using the roots of either the major 3rd, 5th, minor 7th, or b9.**

I know this was a long, brainy explanation of why the #dim7 can replace the VI dominant, but I think it's worth the explanation. You can get a lot of mileage out of both the Diminished 7 Symmetry Rule, and the Dominant 7 and Diminished Rule.

I-IV-iii-VI to Turn Around to a ii-V-I

Jazz musicians are always looking for different ways to cycle chords. In traditional jazz harmony, the harmonic movement is always trying to get back to the I chord.

Whenever the purpose of a chord progression is to come back to the I chord it's called a **turnaround**. One such popular turnaround is the **I-IV-iii-VI**, which cycles into the ii-V-I.

A musical staff in 4/4 time showing the I-IV-iii-VI chord progression. The staff is divided into four measures, each containing a slash to indicate a chord. Above the staff, the chords are labeled: C^{MAJ7}, F^{MAJ7} / F⁷, E^{MIN7}, and A⁷. Below the staff, the Roman numerals are labeled: I, IV, iii, and VI.

Take a look at the IV chord. To be diatonically accurate, the IV chord would be major 7, however, jazz musicians usually turn it into a dominant 7 chord. The major 7 can be used but is less common. The VI chord is usually a dominant 7 in this scenario.

Here's a lick to try over this progression. I have added the ii chord at the end for a smooth resolution.

Exercise 43

A musical staff in 4/4 time showing the I-IV-iii-VI-ii-V-I progression with a lick. The staff is divided into five measures. Above the staff, the chords are labeled: C^{MAJ7}, F⁷, E^{MIN7}, A^{7ALT}, and D^{MIN7}. The lick consists of a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, including a flat and a sharp, leading to the final D^{MIN7} chord.

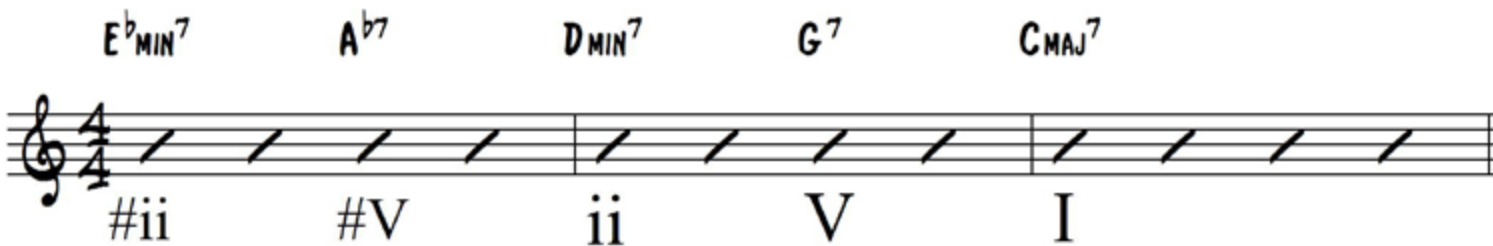
Chromatic ii-V's

Jazz musicians will often utilize what we call **Chromatic ii-V's**. Sometimes they are included in a composition, but jazzers will sometimes add these into the harmony, or outline them in their improvisation.

Let's use a ii-V-I example. This is a common use of chromatic ii-V's but you can apply this to others when cycling in 4ths. Here's just a basic ii-V-I for starters.



Now we are going to substitute the Dmin7 for a chromatic ii-V, and move the Dmin7 into bar 2.



See what happened there? Essentially you are adding more chord changes to the progression and creating more harmonic movement to work with.

Let's try a lick using a chromatic ii-V into a ii-V-I.

Exercise 44



This idea uses a motif starting on the chromatic ii-V and then repeats the first three notes a half step down in bar 2.

Chromatic ii-V's are worth practicing and taking note of. This is a common tool that jazz musicians use time and time again in their improvisation.

Tritone Substitution

An important technique that jazz musicians use to create harmonic movement is **tritone substitution**. I'm going to spend extra time talking about "tritone subs" because this is something you can use a lot in your jazz improvisation.

First things first, let's get some definitions out of the way.

What's a tritone?

A tritone is an interval of three whole tones (tri) between two notes. You can also think of it as a #4 or b5 from a root note.

Example: C-Gb

Gb (or F#) is a tritone away from C and C is a tritone away from Gb.

Go to your instrument and identify some tritones. What is a tritone away from G? From Ab? From B? (*Answers: Db, D, and F*).

A great practice is to go through all 12 keys cycling through 4ths and identify every tritone interval. Remember, I talked about practicing in all 12 keys with the cycle of 4ths in the Scales chapter, so go back and review if you need to.

You want to be able to identify tritones on a whim, as well as any other intervals that exists.

When you understand what a tritone interval is, understanding a tritone substitution is fairly easy.

What's a tritone substitution?

A tritone substitution occurs whenever a chord is being substituted or replaced by another chord with a root a tritone interval away.

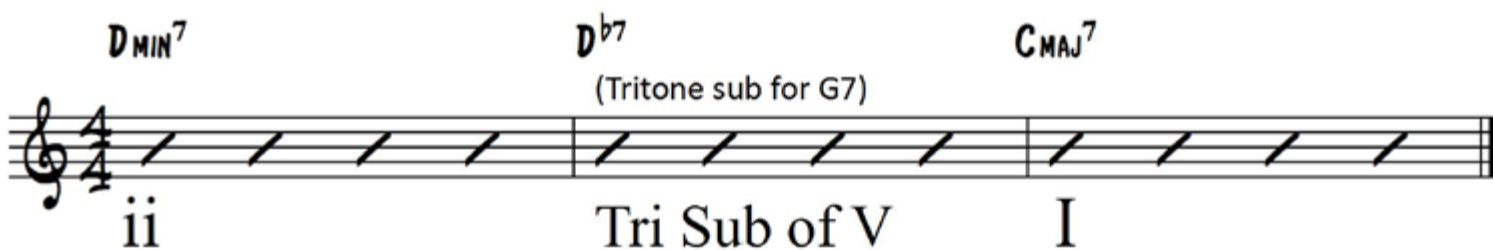
Example: G7 is replaced by Db7.

In practice, a tritone sub in jazz is **most commonly a dominant 7 chord**. This doesn't mean you can't substitute other chord qualities, but a dominant 7 is most often the chord being used to replace. This has a lot to do with voice leading, which we will talk about more in Part 2 of this book.

So let's jump right into some different kinds of tritone substitutions.

Tritone Sub of V

This is by far the **most common** tritone substitution, so pay close attention. This often occurs in a ii-V-I progression, and the V is being substituted by the adjacent tritone dominant.



Notice that a tritone sub of V in the context of a ii-V-I has the root notes moving chromatically (D-Db-C).

Right off the bat, you can conclude that by substituting a Db7 for a G7, it implies that the G7 has altered qualities.

Let me explain. Look at the notes in a G7 and a Db7.



G7: G-B-D-F

Db7: Db-F-A^b-B

What are the notes in Db7 related to G7?

Db is the #11 in G7.

F is the b7 in G7.

Ab is the b9 in G7.

B is the 3rd in G7.

It's important for you to note that the 3rd and 7th are present in both the tritone sub and the G7. This goes into voice leading which I have already promised to go into more detail in Part 2.

Otherwise, we have a #11 and a b9 which are both altered extensions. So the V chord, though being replaced by a tritone, will sound as if it's a G7alt.

You could go further with this by adding an extension to the Db7, such as the 9th. The 9th in Db7 is Eb7, and what is Eb7 in the context of G7? It's the flat 13.

Exercise 45



Tritone Sub of vi or VI

Slightly less common than the sub for V, but one you will come across from time to time is the tritone sub of the minor vi or dominant VI. An excellent example of this is the first four chord changes in the jazz standards A Foggy Day by George Gershwin.

A musical staff in 4/4 time showing the first four chords of 'A Foggy Day'. The staff contains four measures, each with a whole note chord. Above the staff, the chords are labeled: C^{MAJ7}, E^{b7} (Tritone sub for A7), D^{MIN7}, and G⁷. Below the staff, the Roman numerals are labeled: I, Tri Sub of VI, ii, and V. The staff itself contains four measures of whole notes, each with a slash through it, indicating the chord changes.

If you imagine that the A7 is the “V of ii,” meaning that you pretend the ii chord is a minor i chord, you can draw the same conclusions about the note relationships of the E^{b7} and the A7. It’s the same concept. The E^{b7} would imply an A7alt.

For this next lick, I’m going to do something different.

I’m going to combine the tritone sub of VI with the tritone sub of V. To demonstrate, the last three bars will be repeating the lick from Exercise 45. I think it will be helpful for you to see both of these in action together. I’ve circled the tritone subs just to be clear about the substitute chords.

Exercise 46

A musical staff in 4/4 time showing a sequence of chords and a melodic line. The staff contains five measures. Above the staff, the chords are labeled: C^{MAJ7}, E^{b7}, D^{MIN7}, D^{b7}, and C^{MAJ7}. The E^{b7} and D^{b7} chords are circled in blue. The melodic line consists of eighth and quarter notes. The staff itself contains five measures of eighth and quarter notes, each with a slash through it, indicating the chord changes.

Tritone Sub of ii

The last tritone sub that I want to cover is the tritone sub of ii. Often you will see this happen in a minor ii-V-i scenario, but it can also occur in a major ii-V-I.



Now, the tritone sub of ii is often used in a minor blues situation. Because it lends itself so well to the blues, this last lick is going to be a short and sweet bluesy lick.

Exercise 47



There are more possibilities with tritone substitution, but these are the main ones you will encounter. Study up on all of these, and you will have opened up a lot of different possibilities for your jazz improvisation.

We haven't had a Practice Challenge in a while, so let's do one now.

PRACTICE CHALLENGE #10

Easier

- Pick one of the chord progressions we covered in this Chord Progressions chapter, and take the lick (Exercises 33-47) into all 12 keys. Two keys per day for six days. On the seventh day review all 12.

Challenging

- Pick three chord progressions we studied, and take the licks provided for each into all 12 keys. Same method as the easier option.

Summing Up Part 1

Part 1 has been all about getting the necessary tools for jazz improvisation under your belt and learning how to use them. At the center of this half of the book has been the premise of the Jazz Improv Rule.

In Part 1 you learned about:

- » **Important scales for learning and navigating your instrument.** In the process, you learned about the importance of taking music through all 12 keys and practiced different exercises to apply to scales and modes.
- » **Triads and 7th Chords and how to construct them.** You also practiced exercises that had you connecting triads and 7th chord inversions together in the context of a chord progression.
- » **Chord extensions and alterations.** You learned how you can add on color tones to 7th chords, which will influence your note choices. You also learned how these chords are constructed.
- » **Scales and their relationship to chords.** You learned how scales can be used as pitch collections to help you discover note choices over different chords.
- » **Chord progressions.** You learned how they work, the most important ones to know, and how jazz musicians modify them.



Developing Jazz Language

Part 1 was all about getting a strong musical foundation and setting you up for jazz improv success. Take all of that theory and technical stuff you just learned and file it away so you can reference it as you need.

Part 2 is all about **learning jazz language**. You will discover everything you need to know about learning jazz repertoire, developing a jazz vocabulary, and what it takes to become an expert improviser. This part of the book is all about creating actual music.

Are you ready? Let's dive in!

CHAPTER 5

Learning Jazz Standards

When it comes to playing jazz, learning jazz standards is pivotal for your jazz education.

One of my musical heroes is jazz guitarist Peter Bernstein. I took a lesson from him years ago and asked him what kinds of things he was practicing when he was a budding musician.

“I let the tunes teach me how to play.”

By tunes, he meant jazz standards. He went on to elaborate that each jazz standard has something to teach us about improvising, musicianship, and even how to write our own music. He let the tunes teach him how to play.

Jazz is a language. Not “like” a language, this isn’t an analogy. It is a language. Music is a language, and like any language, to learn it you must read, write, speak, and listen to it.

We learned a lot about music theory in Part 1 and fundamentals of understanding jazz harmony. That was necessary. But at the end of the day playing **jazz is all about speaking**. It’s not something you should think about. It’s not something mathematical. Jazz is pure expression.

Jazz standards are the vehicles in which jazz musicians use to improvise. They are the common repertoire that jazz musicians use to communicate with each other. They are the fundamental context for how we communicate the language of jazz.

So is learning jazz standards necessary? You bet it is.

You can't walk into a jazz jam session and not know jazz standards. It would be tough to play a jazz gig with other jazz musicians if you don't know jazz standards. Sometimes the opportunity to play only original music presents itself, but even jazz musicians who write their own music have done their homework.

What are jazz standards?

As the name suggest, jazz standards are compositions that have become “standard” or imperative to know. They are played and recognized by everybody, and therefore will be called on gigs and jam sessions.

Most jazz standards have stood the test of time, and therefore have been around for a while.

Jazz standards, in general, fall into two categories:

1. The Great American Song Book.

These are mostly popular American songs composed for musicals and film, spanning roughly the 1920’s-1950. These are songs like *“My Shining Hour,”* and *“The Way You Look Tonight.”*

2. Jazz Originals.

These are songs written by jazz musicians for other jazz musicians. They became popular and embraced as standards. This is music written by artists like Wayne Shorter such as his composition *“Fee-Fi-Fo-Fum,”* or Miles Davis’ *“So What”*.

Between these two categories, there are thousands of jazz standards out there. Of course, some of them are more “standard” than others, which begs the question...

Which jazz standards should you learn?

Ultimately, you should learn the jazz standards that you enjoy and that other musicians in your circle know. However, here’s a list of 50 jazz standards that I would say everyone should make a goal to learn. These are commonly called upon, no matter what city you live in and are helpful for your jazz education. Click on any of these song titles, and you’ll get to a page on learnjazzstandards.com with resources for you to learn it.

50 JAZZ STANDARDS YOU NEED TO KNOW

All of Me	Have You Met Miss Jones	On Green Dolphin Street
All The Things You Are	How High The Moon	Recorda Me
Alone Together	I Hear a Rhapsody	Satin Doll
Autumn Leaves	I Love You	Stella By Starlight
Billie's Bounce	I Remember You	Scrapple From The Apple
Black Orpheus	I'll Remember April	So What
Blue Bossa	I'm Old Fashioned	Solar
Body and Soul	If I Should Lose You	St. Thomas
But Not For Me	If I Were A Bell	Sweet Georgia Brown
Bye Bye Blackbird	In A Mellow Tone	Take The A Train
Cherokee	In A Sentimental Mood	The Girl From Ipanema
Confirmation	It Could Happen To You	There Is No Greater Love
Days of Wine and Roses	Just Friends	There Will Never Be Another You
Doxy	Misty	Up Jumped Spring
Fly Me To The Moon	My Funny Valentine	What Is This Thing Called Love
Footprints	Night and Day	Yesterdays
Four	Oleo	

I would suggest printing this page and crossing out the ones you already know, or as you learn them. This is a great goal to make for yourself. I find it motivating when I have things listed out, and can see the progress I am making.

Each of these standards has so much to teach you about jazz and music, so this should keep you busy for a while!

This may still be an overwhelming list for you. So I think it's worth spending some more time providing you another list to work off of.

If you are more of a beginner jazz player, I would recommend these 20 easier ones to work with. These all tend to have easier harmonic movement and simpler melodies for the most part.

If you're not a beginner, but don't know all of these standards, I would highly suggest making sure you know them all.

20 JAZZ STANDARDS FOR BEGINNERS

All Blues	Fly Me to the Moon	Summertime
Autumn Leaves	Mack the Knife	There Is No Greater Love
Blue Bossa	Lester Leaps In	Watermelon Man
Bag's Groove	Mr. P.C.	Work Song
C-Jam Blues	My Little Suede Shoes	What Is This Thing Called Love
Cold Duck Time	Song for My Father	
Doxy	St. Thomas	

Again, if you click on any of these standards and have an internet connection, you will be provided with a variety of different resources to help you learn these jazz standards.

How to Learn Jazz Standards

When it comes to learning jazz standards, there isn't a wrong or right way. But there is the easy way and the **better way**.

The easy way is just buy some sheet music, read the melody and chords off the page, memorize (or sometimes not) and call it good. That's certainly the instant gratification way, but I guarantee you that's not the best way to learn jazz standards or any piece of music.

Remember that jazz is a language. One of the most important parts of learning a language is **mimicking**. You hear something, and copy it.

Jazz is not a music that is meant to be learned from sheet music. It never was. Back in the bebop days in the 1940's, jazz musicians would pile into clubs and listen to each other play. They would literally pick things up on the bandstand, in rehearsals, and by just listening to records.

That doesn't mean they couldn't read music, or never read music, but learning music **by ear** was always the primary method. That's something I want you to understand. **Jazz is first and foremost an aurally learned music**. So if you want to become a great jazz improviser, you need to follow in the footsteps of the great jazz musicians before you.

Learning music by ear is not always the easy way, and if you aren't used to it, you may find it quite difficult at first. But it's the best way hands down, and the more you do it, the easier it gets.

I'm going to share with you how I learn jazz standards. It's not just me, though. This is the advice of many world-class jazz musicians I have had the privilege to be mentored by. So know that this information is big-time legitimate stuff.

Steps to Learning Jazz Standards

1. Listen to the jazz standard (no instrument involved).

The first step is picking a tune you want to learn and just listening to it. This doesn't sound like rocket science, but it's the most important part. And I don't mean listen to it once. Listen to it over and over again.

Listen to multiple versions of the standard. This will give you better perspective and understanding of the composition. Check out old and new recordings. Check out different instrumentalists, and if pertinent, definitely listen to a vocalist version.

Make sure you know how that jazz standard goes forwards and backward.

2. Learn the melody by ear.

This one requires two steps. Remember, there is no sheet music involved!

- » *Be able to sing the melody along with the recording.* If you can sing it, you can play it. Or at least that means you have those sounds engrained in your ear. You haven't touched your instrument yet unless you're a vocalist.
- » *Learn the melody on your instrument.* Translate what you already know through singing, to your instrument. This is the moment where you pick up your instrument and start playing!

Tips for learning the melody:

Some artists are better for learning the melody of a tune than others. For example, Billie Holiday and Miles Davis tend to take a lot of liberties with the melody, and therefore aren't ideal for learning authentic melodies.

When in doubt, **Frank Sinatra** is your friend. Sinatra always sings the melodies completely straight, so use him whenever you can!

3. Learn the harmony by ear.

This is usually tougher than learning the melody by ear. But don't go straight to your real book!

The key is to first listen to the bass player. Listen hard and try to identify the root notes on your instrument. Then you can fill in the blanks with what quality the chords are. If you've been following along in the book from the beginning, you should already have a good idea of how different chords and chord progressions sound.

Note: it's not shameful to check your work with some sheet music after you've put in the work.

4. Put it all together.

Get out your metronome or even a play-along, and start practicing. If you are a chordal instrument such as a piano or guitar, try comping through the song. If you are a horn player, try playing the arpeggios of the chords. Just practice and play.

5. Get together with another musician and jam.

This is the whole reason we learn tunes. You are putting the music into practice. The real education happens when you play with other musicians. Always remember that. If you want to know a tune well, play it often with other musicians.

Learning jazz standards is extremely important. If you want to become a great jazz improviser, you need to be learning the music.

I want to repeat one last time the words that Peter Bernstein said to me.

"I let the tunes teach me how to play."

Such simple but important words.

Let the tunes teach you how to play. They have all of the harmonic and rhythmic information you need to play jazz. The more jazz standards you learn, the more competent you will be as a jazz improviser.

C H A P T E R 6

Important Jazz Song Forms

Before we go over some specific techniques for playing jazz language, I think it's appropriate to identify **two very important** song forms in jazz music.

These two song forms show up time and time again in jazz and therefore are worth giving some extra attention. It's important that you have a clear understanding of these and spend some extra time working on them.

What are the song forms I'm referring to? **The Blues and Rhythm Changes.**

The blues is saturated in jazz music. Essentially, the blues gave birth to jazz music.

Rhythm changes is the product of George Gershwin's "I Got Rhythm," but those chord changes were adopted by beboppers such as saxophonist Charlie Parker. Parker wrote a lot of songs that utilized those changes, and he had a profound effect on how jazz is even played today.

I want you to understand these song forms very well. These will come up often in your jazz studies. Lots of jazz standards are written in these styles.

In addition, these two song forms contain a lot of the harmonic movement that you will see in many jazz standards.

Let's dive in!

The Blues

The blues was born out of the African slave trade in the United States. It came straight out of the oppression of the working fields, where the slaves combined African music traditions, spirituals, and African-American work songs. Often there was a “call and response” element and no strict form.

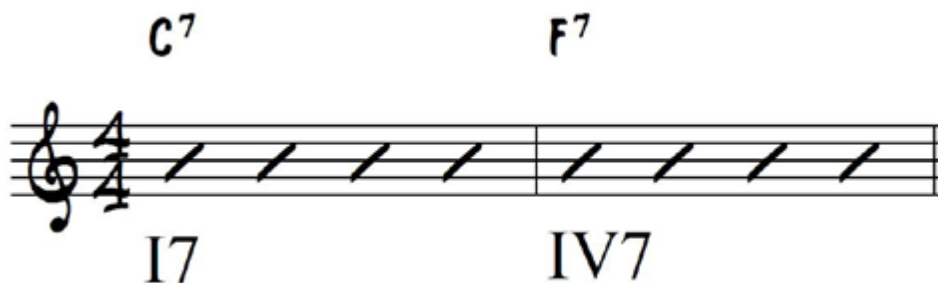
The blues evolved, of course, and when early jazz was coming to fruition in the diverse port city of New Orleans, the blues was one of the key ingredients.

The blues has taken on many forms over different genres and time periods. When it comes to jazz, the blues is essential to study, not only because it’s so influential in jazz, but because it’s a study in jazz harmony itself.

The blues is most commonly a **12 bar form**, though you can find tunes with different variations.

The two most important that you need to know as a jazz musician is what I call the **Basic I7-IV7-V Blues**, and the **Basic Jazz Blues**.

One thing to note is that when it comes to understanding the chords by numbers, the diatonic series does not always represent the same quality you would see from the Major Diatonic Series. For example, the **I chord is a dominant chord as well as the IV chord**.



Let’s go over these important blues forms, starting with the Basic I7-IV7-V7. These will be in Concert Bb as this is a popular key to play the blues in jazz. Click on the example to hear what it sounds like.

Basic I7-IV7-V7 Blues

The image displays a 12-bar blues progression in C major, written in 4/4 time. The notation is organized into three systems, each with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first system consists of four measures: the first measure is labeled C⁷ and I7; the second measure is labeled F⁷ and IV7; the third measure is labeled C⁷ and I7; and the fourth measure is unlabeled. The second system also consists of four measures: the first measure is labeled F⁷ and IV7; the second measure is unlabeled; the third measure is labeled C⁷ and I7; and the fourth measure is unlabeled. The third system consists of four measures: the first measure is labeled G⁷ and V; the second measure is labeled F⁷ and IV7; the third measure is labeled C⁷ and I7; and the fourth measure is labeled (G7) and v. The notation uses a shorthand where the first measure of each system is labeled with a chord name above the staff and a Roman numeral below the staff, and subsequent measures are labeled with Roman numerals below the staff.

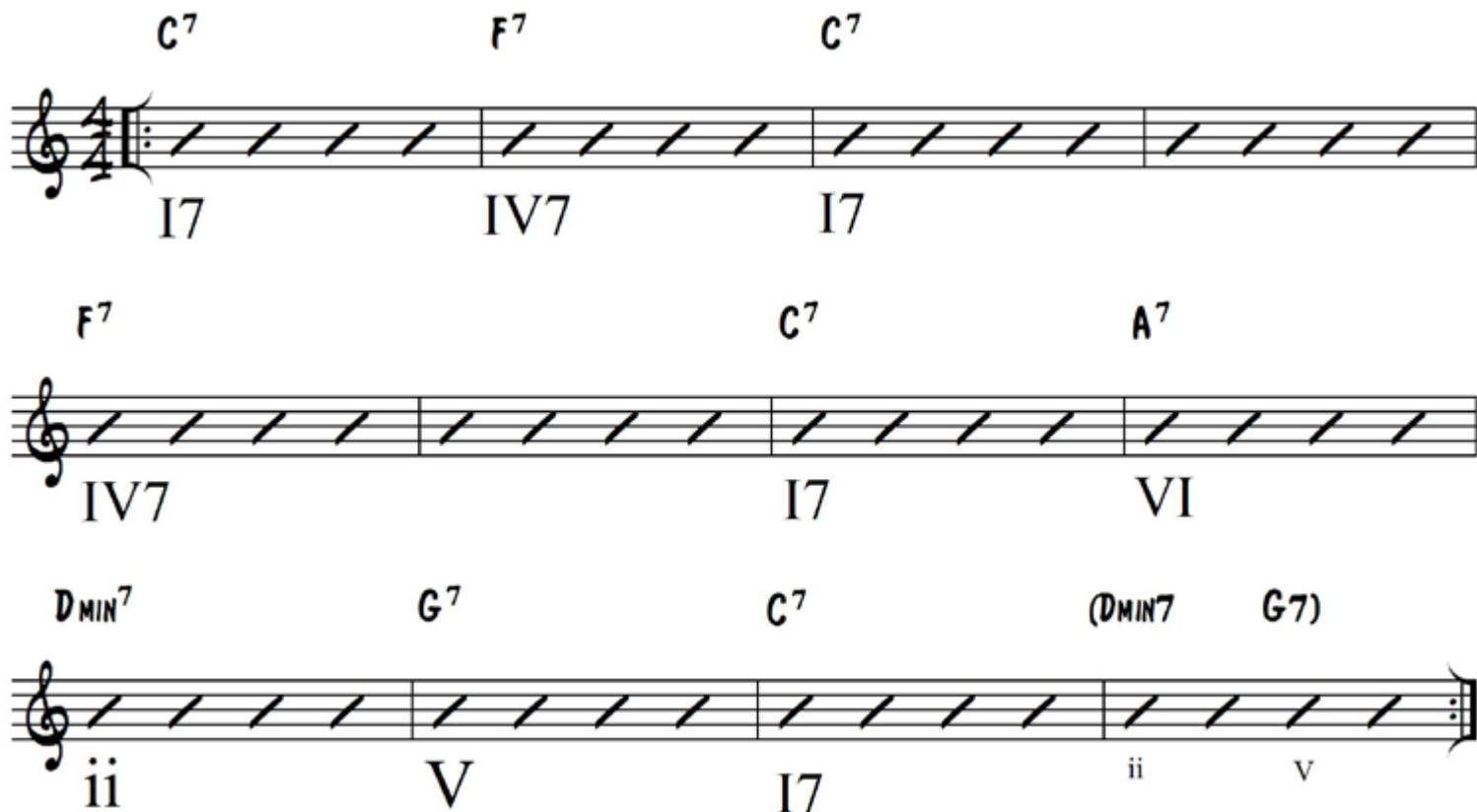
This blues form is a basic 12 bar blues, utilizing only three chords: the I7, IV7, and the V chord.

Take some time to memorize this chord progression, because this is important to know!

If you play a chordal instrument such as piano or guitar, be sure you can comp through this and play all of the chords. If you are a horn player or other instrumentalist, be able to play the arpeggios.

Now let's go over the Basic Jazz Blues. Jazz musicians have taken the Basic I7-IV7-V Blues and added more chord changes and variations to it. Many jazz blues standards are written with these changes.

Basic Jazz Blues



The image displays the Basic Jazz Blues chord progression across three staves of music. Each staff contains four measures, with slanted lines representing the melody. Chord symbols are placed above and below the staves.

Staff	Measure 1	Measure 2	Measure 3	Measure 4
Staff 1	C ⁷ I ⁷	F ⁷ IV ⁷	C ⁷ I ⁷	
Staff 2	F ⁷ IV ⁷		C ⁷ I ⁷	A ⁷ VI
Staff 3	D ^{MIN} ⁷ ii	G ⁷ V	C ⁷ I ⁷	(D ^{MIN} ⁷ G ⁷) ii V

The differences in the chord changes start in bar 8. Instead of going to the V chord in bar 9, they play a ii-V into the I⁷ chord in bar 11. To bridge the gap from the B^b7 in bar 7, the dominant VI chord is added in bar 8.

You may have noticed the chord in parenthesis in the Basic I⁷-IV-V Blues, and now you see it again in the Basic Jazz Blues (C^{min}7-F7).

This is what we call a **turnaround**. The blues is a short form that is repeated many times throughout the duration of a song. To get from the end back to the beginning, you can add a turnaround such as a ii-V to get back to the top.

Now, jazz musicians get bored easily. They like to add even more changes into the blues. We've already covered a bunch of different kinds of chord substitutions in the Chord Progressions chapter, and those are certainly all game. But there are certain additions to the blues in particular that jazz musicians like to use.

Common Jazz Blues Additions

Chord progressions for a 12-bar blues in B-flat major:

- Bar 1: C⁷ I⁷
- Bar 2: F⁷ IV⁷
- Bar 3: C⁷ I⁷
- Bar 4: G^{min7} C⁷ ii-V of IV⁷
- Bar 5: F⁷ IV⁷
- Bar 6: F^{#dim7} #iv dim
- Bar 7: C⁷ I⁷
- Bar 8: E^{min7} A⁷ iii VI
- Bar 9: D^{min7} ii
- Bar 10: G⁷ V
- Bar 11: C⁷ I⁷ VI
- Bar 12: (A⁷ D^{min7} G⁷) ii V

In bar 4, a **ii-V of IV⁷** is added, meaning that you can perceive the Fmin7-Bb7 as a ii-V-into Eb7. This just makes it easier to think about rather than relating these chords to the parent key center of Bb.

In bar 6, the **#iv diminished** is added. You'll recognize this if you followed along with the chord substitutions section in the Chord Progressions chapter.

In bar 8, the **iii chord** is added with the VI. This just adds some nice voice leading into the ii chord.

The turnaround at the end now has a VI chord added in bar 11. Essentially, bars 11 and 12 are a I-VI-ii-V chord progression.

Bird Blues

There is one more kind of jazz blues you should know about. It's called a **Bird Blues**.

Bird refers to Charlie Parker, the iconic saxophonist who pioneered Bebop. If you don't know who he is, be sure to look him up! His nickname was "Bird", hence Bird blues, and he took the 12 bar blues and re-harmonized it to make his own version of the blues. A good example is [Blues for Alice](#).

His version of the blues is straight out of the bebop tradition. There are lots of chord changes and re-harmonized chords. On the next page, you'll see a Bird Blues and I will circle the important blues chords so that you can see where he got them from.

Chord progression for Bird Blues (12 measures):

Measure 1: **CMAJ⁷** (circled), I

Measure 2: **B_{MIN}^{7(b5)}**, ii-V of vi

Measure 3: **E⁷**, vi

Measure 4: **A_{MIN}⁷**, ii-V of IV7

Measure 5: **G_{MIN}⁷**

Measure 6: **C⁷**

Measure 7: **F⁷** (circled), IV7

Measure 8: **F_{MIN}⁷**

Measure 9: **B^{b7}**

Measure 10: **E_{MIN}⁷**

Measure 11: **A⁷**

Measure 12: **E^b_{MIN}⁷**, **A^{b7}**

Measure 13: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 14: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 15: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 16: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 17: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 18: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 19: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 20: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 21: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 22: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 23: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 24: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 25: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 26: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 27: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 28: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 29: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 30: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 31: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 32: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 33: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 34: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 35: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 36: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 37: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 38: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 39: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 40: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 41: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 42: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 43: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 44: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 45: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 46: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 47: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 48: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 49: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 50: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 51: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 52: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 53: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 54: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 55: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 56: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 57: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 58: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 59: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 60: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 61: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 62: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 63: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 64: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 65: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 66: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 67: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 68: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 69: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 70: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 71: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 72: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 73: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 74: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 75: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 76: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 77: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 78: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 79: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 80: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 81: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 82: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 83: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 84: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 85: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 86: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 87: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 88: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 89: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 90: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 91: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 92: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 93: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 94: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 95: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 96: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 97: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 98: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 99: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 100: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 101: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 102: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 103: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 104: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 105: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 106: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 107: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 108: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 109: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 110: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 111: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 112: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 113: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 114: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 115: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 116: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 117: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 118: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 119: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 120: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 121: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 122: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 123: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 124: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 125: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 126: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 127: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 128: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 129: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 130: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 131: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 132: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 133: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 134: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 135: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 136: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 137: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 138: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 139: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 140: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 141: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 142: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 143: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 144: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 145: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 146: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 147: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 148: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 149: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 150: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 151: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 152: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 153: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 154: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 155: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 156: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 157: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 158: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 159: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 160: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 161: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 162: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 163: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 164: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 165: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 166: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 167: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 168: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 169: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 170: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 171: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 172: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 173: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 174: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 175: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 176: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 177: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 178: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 179: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 180: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 181: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 182: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 183: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 184: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 185: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 186: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 187: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 188: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 189: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 190: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 191: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 192: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 193: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 194: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 195: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 196: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 197: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 198: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 199: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 200: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 201: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 202: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 203: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 204: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 205: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 206: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 207: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 208: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 209: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 210: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 211: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 212: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 213: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 214: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 215: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 216: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 217: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 218: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 219: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 220: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 221: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 222: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 223: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 224: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 225: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 226: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 227: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 228: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 229: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 230: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 231: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 232: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 233: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 234: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 235: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 236: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 237: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 238: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 239: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 240: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 241: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 242: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 243: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 244: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 245: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 246: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 247: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 248: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 249: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 250: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 251: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 252: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 253: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 254: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 255: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 256: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 257: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 258: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 259: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 260: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 261: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 262: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 263: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 264: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 265: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 266: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 267: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 268: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 269: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 270: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 271: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 272: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 273: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 274: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 275: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 276: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 277: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 278: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 279: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 280: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 281: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 282: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 283: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 284: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 285: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 286: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 287: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 288: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 289: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 290: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 291: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 292: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 293: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 294: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 295: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 296: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 297: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 298: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 299: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 300: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 301: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 302: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 303: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 304: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 305: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 306: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 307: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 308: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 309: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 310: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 311: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 312: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 313: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 314: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 315: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 316: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 317: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 318: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 319: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 320: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 321: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 322: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 323: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 324: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 325: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 326: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 327: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 328: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 329: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 330: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 331: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 332: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 333: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 334: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 335: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 336: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 337: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 338: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 339: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 340: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 341: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 342: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 343: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 344: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 345: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 346: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 347: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 348: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 349: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 350: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 351: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 352: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 353: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 354: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 355: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 356: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 357: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 358: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 359: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 360: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 361: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 362: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 363: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 364: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 365: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 366: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 367: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 368: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 369: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 370: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 371: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 372: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 373: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 374: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 375: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 376: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 377: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 378: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 379: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 380: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 381: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 382: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 383: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 384: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 385: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 386: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 387: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 388: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 389: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 390: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 391: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 392: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 393: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 394: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 395: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 396: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 397: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 398: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 399: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 400: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 401: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 402: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 403: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 404: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 405: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 406: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 407: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 408: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 409: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 410: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 411: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 412: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 413: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 414: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 415: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 416: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 417: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 418: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 419: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 420: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 421: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 422: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 423: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 424: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 425: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 426: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 427: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 428: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 429: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 430: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 431: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 432: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 433: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 434: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 435: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 436: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 437: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 438: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 439: **CMAJ⁷**, I

Measure 440: **(A⁷**, VI

Measure 441: **D_{MIN}⁷**, ii

Measure 442: **G⁷** (circled), V

Measure 443: **CMAJ<**

We call these chords **target chords**. They are being targeted by a series of other progressions that eventually resolve to them.

The **ii-V of vi** is a detour that leads into the ii-V of IV7.

The series of **cycling chromatic ii-V's** leads into the ii (Cmin7) which leads into the V (F7).

POPULAR JAZZ BLUES STANDARDS

To continue on with our theme of providing lists of songs to learn, here are some jazz blues tunes worth learning. Click on any of them to get more resources.

All Blues	Chi Chi	Sandu
Au Privave	Cool Blues	Sonnymoon For Two
Bag's Groove	Equinox	Straight No Chaser
Billie's Bounce	Footprints	Take The Coltrane
Birk's Works	Freddie Freeloader	Tenor Madness
Blue Monk	Freight Trane	Things Ain't What They Used To Be
Blues for Alice	Mr. P.C	Watermelon Man
Blues In The Closet	Now's The Time	West Coast Blues
C-Jam Blues	Relaxin' At Camarillo	
Cheryl	Route 66	

PRACTICE CHALLENGE #10

Easier

- The most common keys for a jazz blues to be played in is C, F, Bb, G, and Eb. Pick one of the jazz blues songs listed above, learn it from a recording (see the link) and take it into those 5 keys.

Note: I know this may already be challenging, but you've got this!

Challenging

- Do the same as the "Easier" challenge, but take it into all 12 keys.

Rhythm Changes

As I've already mentioned, rhythm changes comes from George Gershwin's *"I Got Rhythm"*.

Charlie Parker and the beboppers adopted the chord changes from I Got Rhythm and wrote many different songs using them. Because the song form became so widely used, it is now an essential study for jazz musicians.

Similarly to the blues, it is also a great study of jazz harmony. The song form uses many important chord progressions such as the I-VI-ii-V. The bridge is a great example of dominant 7 chords cycling in 4ths.

It is also a good example of a song in **AABA** form.

What is AABA form?

In jazz (and other styles of music), A's and B's are sometimes used to break up and organize a song. This allows the musicians playing it to understand the structure of the form and if any sections are repeated.

AABA is a common form found in jazz.

If AABA form doesn't make 100% sense to you yet, hopefully the next few pages will clarify things.

I will demonstrate a lead sheet of rhythm changes, and the following page will show you the chords by number.

C^{MAJ7} A⁷
 A^{MIN7} D^{MIN7} G⁷ E^{MIN7}
 C^{MAJ7} A⁷
 A^{MIN7} D^{MIN7} G⁷

A

C⁷ F⁷ F[♯]_{DIM}⁷ C^{MAJ7} A⁷ D^{MIN7} G⁷

C^{MAJ7} A^{MIN7} D^{MIN7} G⁷ C^{MAJ7} A⁷ D^{MIN7} G⁷

A

C⁷ F⁷ F[♯]_{DIM}⁷ D^{MIN7} G⁷ C^{MAJ7}

E⁷ A⁷

B

D⁷ G⁷

C^{MAJ7} A^{MIN7} D^{MIN7} G⁷ C^{MAJ7} A⁷ D^{MIN7} G⁷

A

C⁷ F⁷ F[♯]_{DIM}⁷ D^{MIN7} G⁷ C^{MAJ7}

I vi/Vi ii V I/iii VI ii V

I IV7 #ivdim I vi/Vi ii V

I vi/Vi ii V I/iii VI ii V

I IV7 #ivdim ii V I

III7 VI

II7 V

I vi/Vi ii V I/iii VI ii V

I IV7 #ivdim ii V I

When you see a chord stacked on top of another, it simply means there is more than one choice. You may notice that for the vi chord I give the option of either the dominant VI or the minor vi. Both are commonly used.

Pay attention to the cycling dominant chords in measures 17-24. If you look at the chords by number analysis, you'll see the III chord is made dominant, and the II chord is made dominant as well.

Rhythm changes is a song form you should memorize. I would spend plenty of time working on songs that use these changes and understanding how the harmony works.

POPULAR RHYTHM CHANGES STANDARDS

Of course, I'm leaving you with a list of rhythm changes tunes to learn! This time around, I'll keep it short.

I Got Rhythm	Rhythm-A-Ning	Dexterity	Steeplechase
Lester Leaps In	Moose The Mooche	Anthropology	Oleo

PRACTICE CHALLENGE #12

Easier

- The most common key for rhythm changes is almost always concert Bb. However, this doesn't mean taking it into other keys isn't a great practice. Pick one standard listed above and learn it in 3 keys of your choice.
- This is still a tough challenge, but feel free to adjust the intensity to your skill level, even if that means just learning the rhythm changes standard.

Challenging

- You knew this was coming! Take the rhythm changes standard you learn into all 12 keys.

CHAPTER 7

Developing Jazz Language

So far in Part 2 of this book I've talked a lot about what you should be learning. This has all been very necessary, because at the end of the day, these jazz standards are going to provide the environment for you to improvise.

But now I want to talk about actually **developing jazz language**. Part 1 had you learning how to navigate your instrument and learn the necessary tools for improvisation. But you may be wondering, *"How do I make all of this start to sound like jazz?"*

There are two sides to developing jazz language we are going to talk about in this chapter: **mimicking and conceptualizing**.

We've already talked about how jazz is a language in every sense of the word. So I will explain these to you in those terms.

Mimicking is simply hearing jazz being spoken, copying it and using it in your own vocabulary.

Conceptualizing is analyzing jazz language and figuring out how it works. It's the grammar.

So let's dive in. First we'll talk about mimicking, which I'm going to use in a slightly more provocative term...

Stealing Jazz Language

When it comes to jazz, if you aren't somewhat of a thief you're missing out on the goods. And I know this may sound like peer pressure, but everyone's doing it so you might as well join in!

Don't worry, stealing in jazz is a good thing. In fact, it's not a negative thing at all. For example, have you ever used someone else's argument or idea in one of your own conversations? Of course you have! You probably said it a slightly different way, but more or less, you "stole" the idea from someone else.

If you truly want to learn the jazz language, you need to be learning musical ideas from the masters that came before you.

This is not my original idea. Think about Sonny Stitt for example. His playing is very much in the style of Charlie Parker. What do you think he was doing? He was ripping off Charlie Parker lines and shedding his stuff!

Eventually he developed his own sound because no one can truly sound exactly like someone else. But at the end of the day, you can hear the tradition that Sonny Stitt was coming out of.

Here are the things you should be stealing:

- » **Small licks and phrases from your favorite jazz musicians.**
- » **Entire solos of your favorite jazz musicians.**
- » **Tone, attack, intonation, and phrasing.**

You need to figure this stuff out, and the best way to do that is to mimic the way successful jazz musicians speak.

How to Learn Jazz Language

So now you know what to do, the question is *how do you do it?* Do you remember how I told you to learn jazz standards? The exact same way.

Just to review in case it's been a while, or if you skipped that section of the book, the best way to learn jazz language (or standards) is **by ear**.

When you learn musical information by ear, you memorize it better and improve your ear. Your ear is your most valuable asset as a jazz improviser, so you want to exercise it.

Let's go over some steps for learning jazz language. You can apply both of these to either learning an entire solo or just a lick.

1. Pick a solo or lick you like.

Don't underestimate this step! I've tried learning solos that teachers or other musicians have suggested to me, but wasn't very excited to learn them. The result was that I **didn't finish them, or I slogged through them and didn't get much out of it in the end**.

This is especially an important thing to consider with learning solos. Learning an entire solo, or even part of a solo can be a time-consuming endeavor. So make sure that you are working on something you truly want to learn. If you are excited about the solo you are learning, it can make a world of difference.

2. Listen to the solo or lick until you can sing along.

This is a step that many skip, but it can be helpful if you stick to it. It's tempting to rush into figuring out a piece of musical information on your instrument without truly knowing it first. It's my belief that if you can sing along with it (*i.e. you have memorized the melody by ear*), translating it to your instrument becomes much easier.

Think about it: you aren't worried about what the solo or lick sounds like, so therefore you've won half the battle! This will help you internalize the music (*which is the ultimate end goal*) and your instrument is simply a voice used to express what you are hearing.

3. Learn one short phrase at a time.

Obviously, if you are just learning a lick, you only need to learn one phrase! **The idea here is you are finally taking what you already can sing and translating it to your instrument.**

Don't bite off more than you can chew. Identify the first phrase in the solo; a place where it would be appropriate to cut off. While listening to the recording, learn the phrase one note at a time if you have to. If it's a quick passage, you may want to use a slow-downer software to hear the notes.

4. Repeat each phrase (or lick) you learn along with the recording.

This is key for three reasons:

- » **Memorization.** You need to get the passage under your fingers and repetition is the best way to do that.
- » **Accuracy.** Playing along with the recording holds you accountable to playing exactly what the soloist played. It's easy to accidentally create your own version of the line, with slight rhythmic or even note variations if you aren't checking back with the recording.
- » **Authenticity.** The idea is to try to get inside the feeling and the phrasing of the soloist, not just simply learn the notes. Playing along with the recording helps you mimic the soloist's execution of the phrases.

5. Repeat whole sections along with the recording.

This applies more for learning solos than licks.

Basically, you are continually repeating bigger and bigger sections. You learn one phrase, you repeat until you memorize it. You learn the next phrase, you repeat it until you memorize it. **Then** you practice the first two phrases together along with the recording... etc.

Eventually you'll have learned the first 32 bars or so of the solo, and you'll practice just those 32 bars altogether before moving on. What this ends up looking like is repeating parts of the solo, scores if not hundreds of time. Sound like a lot of work? It is. But the reward is great!

6. After you've completed the lick or solo, review it for a period of time.

How long you review it isn't important. The idea is that you are keeping it fresh on your fingers and your memory for a while. **The idea isn't that you can play the solo verbatim at a gig or jam session, it's so that it has the chance to sink into your subconscious.** Soon some of the feeling, ideas, and language will come out in your playing one way or the other.

PRACTICE CHALLENGE #13

Easier

- Make a list of jazz artists you like. Pick one. Pick a solo you really enjoy from that artist. Find one lick you like in the solo and learn it using the steps provided above.

Challenging

- Do the same as the "Easier" option, but instead you are going to learn at least 2 choruses of the solo you pick. The whole one may be ideal. Make sure the solo is accessible for your skill level.

OR

Take the lick you learned and bring it through all 12 keys.

Guide Tones and Voice Leading: The Power Duo

Let's start getting down to the nitty-gritty.

I've already told you how important it is for you to be learning jazz language by ear from the masters. Great. You can copy those guys and get a lot of mileage out of that, but we also need to **conceptualize** jazz language.

Our first stop to conceptualizing jazz language is **guide tones**. Guide tones are essential if you want to hear the chord changes come out in your solos.

What is a guide tone?

Guide tones are notes within a chord structure that both help define a chord, and can be used to transition to another chord melodically.

The most common guide tones are the 3rds and 7ths.

These two notes are your best friends when it comes to jazz improvisation. Why? Let's review quickly the formulas to all of our 7th chords which we covered in the Chords chapter.

7th chord formulas:

Major 7: Root-3rd-5th-7th

Dominant 7: Root-3rd-5th-b7

Minor 7: Root-b3-5th-b7

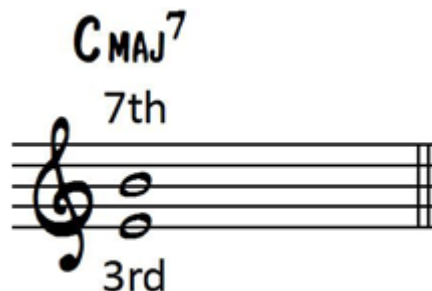
Half diminished: Root-b3-b5-b7

Diminished 7: Root-b3-b5-bb7

Now look through them and identify which notes are changing chord to chord. **It's the 3rds and 7ths.** The only exception would be the b5 in the half diminished and diminished 7, which would make the b5 a possible guide tone as well.

The 3rds and 7ths define whether a chord is major, minor, or dominant. In jazz harmony this is incredibly important. So do you think using the 3rds and 7ths in your musical lines is going to be important? You bet it is.

Let's take a look at the 3rds and 7ths guide tones over a Cmaj7 to get started.



The 3rd is E and the 7th is B. Fairly simple stuff if you've been following along from the beginning with the Scales and Chords chapters. These are your guide tones for a Cmaj7 chord.

Now let's take things up to the next level and introduce a ii-V-I chord progression. We'll stay in the key of C and use the chords **Dmin7-G7-Cmaj7**.



Dmin7 guide tones: F and C

G7 guide tones: F and B

Cmaj7 guide tones: E and B

Now I want you to pay close attention to something very important.

Did you notice how I started the Dmin7 with the 3rd in the bass, but then when we moved to the G7 the 7th was in the bass?

The reason I did this is to demonstrate good **voice leading**. If you've been following along in the book, you will have heard this term before, and I've promised to explain it in more detail. Time to fulfill the promise!

What is voice leading?

Voice leading is the smooth melodic movement of notes (or voices) from one chord to the next.

The reason I put the 7th of the G7 in the bass is because the F was already there. Also, see how the 7th of Dmin7 (C) moves in an easy step wise motion into the 3rd of G7 (B)?

The key term there was **step wise motion**.

Take a look at how these voices move.

A musical staff in 4/4 time showing the voice leading between three chords: D^{MIN}7, G⁷, and C^{MAJ}7. The staff has two voices. For D^{MIN}7, the 7th is on the top line (F) and the 3rd is on the second space (D). For G⁷, the 3rd is on the top line (F) and the 7th is on the second space (D). For C^{MAJ}7, the 7th is on the top line (F) and the 3rd is on the second space (D). Blue arrows indicate the movement: a downward arrow from the D^{MIN}7 7th to the G⁷ 3rd, an upward arrow from the D^{MIN}7 3rd to the G⁷ 7th, a downward arrow from the G⁷ 7th to the C^{MAJ}7 3rd, and an upward arrow from the G⁷ 3rd to the C^{MAJ}7 7th.

While the 3rd and the 7th remain the same note from the Dmin7 to the G7, the 7th to the 3rd move a half step down.

While the 3rd to the 7th remain the same note from the G7 to the Cmaj7, the 7th to the 3rd move a half step down. Noticing a pattern here?

The 3rds and 7ths ii-V-I Rule:

When chords are cycling in 4ths (such as in the case of a ii-V-I):

- The 3rd of a minor 7 will always be the 7th of the proceeding dominant 7 chord

Ex.

Dmin7: 3rd = F

G7: 7th = F

- The 3rd of a dominant 7 will always be the 7th of the proceeding major 7 chord.

Ex.

G7: 3rd = B

Cmaj7: 7th = B

That's pretty interesting, right? Now if you venture outside of those patterns, different rules come to light. But let's just focus on the ii-V-I.

Of course, this means we have one more rule to discuss.

The 3rds and 7ths Half Step Rule:

- When chords are cycling in 4ths, the 7th of a minor 7 chord will always resolve to the 3rd of a dominant 7 chord by a half step.

Ex.

Dmin7: 7th = C

G7: 3rd = B

- The 7th of a dominant 7 chord will always resolve to the 3rd of a major 7 chord by a half step.

Ex.

G7: 7th = F

Cmaj7: 3rd = E

There are other rules, such as the 3rd of a dominant resolving to the 7th of a minor by a half step. Many chords don't have guide tones resolving by half steps, such as a minor 7 to a minor 7. But again, I think it's best to focus on this scenario for now.

So that you can visualize this better, let's make the guide tones to this ii-V-I melodic rather than chordal.



Try playing through this. It's simple, but you can hear the chord changes right? That's how powerful the combination of guide tone and voice leading can be. Without having any chords played, you can hear the harmonic movement.

Let's take this to the next level. You may be thinking, "*this is great, but this doesn't sound like music.*" And you'd be right. Simply voice leading the guide tones isn't going to have you playing incredible jazz solos.

We have to connect the dots with a melody. It's been a while since you've had a proper exercise lick to play, so here's a good one to get you going again.

Exercise 48



I had two goals when writing this exercise: **1. Keep it diatonic** (no chromaticism, that's coming up in the next section), **2. Connect the 7ths to 3rds in a half step motion.**

Let's take a look at this lick a little closer.



See how the notes connect?

Now I want to be thorough for you. You may wonder how I came up with the notes in between the 3rds and 7ths. The answer: **chord tones and pitch collections.**

If you've been following along in the book from the beginning, you'll remember the chord tone exercises we did in the Chords chapter. You'll also remember when I talked about scales as pitch collections. They aren't musical by themselves, but when thought of as pitch collections, we can use them to draw note choices from. We also talked about chord/scale theory in the Chords chapter.

So if you study Exercise 48, you'll see that I am mixing in step-wise motion with chord tone leaps.

The other influencer in my note choices is **direction.**

For demonstration sake, I started the lick out on the 3rd of Dmin7, and started moving my line higher in pitch until I reached the 7th, which I know resolves down to the 3rd of G7. The G7, though it moves both up and down in pitch, has a general direction heading down to the 7th which resolves down to the 3rd of Cmaj7. I chose for the Cmaj7 line to move up in pitch towards the 7th.



Obviously, there are many different ways to approach this. These are just my note and directional choices.

Now let's take this to a larger scale. **We are going to apply our knowledge of guide tones and voice leading to a jazz standard.** Remember, the jazz standards have a lot to teach us harmonically, so what could be more appropriate?

Let's apply this to Jerome Kern's [All the Things You Are](#). Admittedly, this isn't the easiest of standards out there. But it's a fantastic study of chords cycling in 4ths, which as we know, lends itself well to guide tone voice leading.

Exercise 49 (next page)

F^{MIN}7 **B^bMIN⁷** **E^b7** **A^bMAJ⁷**
D^bMAJ⁷ **G⁷** **CMAJ⁷**
CMIN⁷ **FMIN⁷** **B^b7** **E^bMAJ⁷**
A^bMAJ⁷ **D⁷** **GMAJ⁷**
AMIN⁷ **D⁷** **GMAJ⁷**
F[#]MIN⁷ **B⁷** **EMAJ⁷** **C⁷**
FMIN⁷ **B^bMIN⁷** **E^b7** **A^bMAJ⁷**
D^bMAJ⁷ **D^bMIN⁷** **CMIN⁷** **B^{DIM}7**
B^bMIN⁷ **E^b7** **A^bMAJ⁷**

Isn't it phenomenal? You can hear the chord changes without playing chords at all. I don't know about you, but this gets me excited! Think of the possibilities if we can all learn how to voice lead with guide tones better.

Now, of course I'm not going to leave it there. As we have done with the ii-V-I, let's connect the dots with some melodic lines.

Here's the rules I am using for this next exercise:

- » **Only diatonic notes.** There won't be chromaticism as that stuff is coming up next.
- » **Chord will be connected by guide tones, voice lead by either half steps or whole steps.**
- » **Mostly eighth notes.**
- » **A contained range, so that most instruments can play it.**

That's a lot of rules to abide by, and certainly it will limit the musical potential of the melodic lines. But that's okay! Sometimes putting up stipulations for your playing can help you exercise muscles that are weak.

Remember, this exercise has you intentionally playing run-on sentence eighth note lines. **This is not necessarily how you should play in a musical situation.** But by forcing yourself to do this, you are challenging yourself to connect these chords in creative ways.

I have the 3rds and 7ths underlined to help you see the guide tones and how they are connected.

Exercise 50 (next page)

F MIN7 B^b MIN7 E^b7 A^b MAJ7
 D^b MAJ7 G7 C MAJ7
 C MIN7 F MIN7 B^b7 E^b MAJ7
 A^b MAJ7 D7 G MAJ7
 A MIN7 D7 G MAJ7
 F[#] MIN7 B7 E MAJ7 C7
 F MIN7 B^b MIN7 E^b7 A^b MAJ7
 D^b MAJ7 D^b MIN7 C MIN7 B DIM7
 B^b MIN7 E^b7 A^b MAJ7

It's important to mention that not all voice leading needs to use guide tones. You can voice lead other chord tones to create melodies, but know that guide tones are the defining notes of a chord.

Guide tones and voice leading are a powerful duo. I encourage you to explore these tools further and start putting them into practice. If you do, you will be surprised at how your jazz language will start to develop.

PRACTICE CHALLENGE #14

Easier

- Pick a jazz standard you know and identify the guide tones. Use voice leading techniques to connect them together. Use previous examples and exercises as a frame of reference. Be able to play through the song with a metronome.

Challenging

- Take the "Easier" challenge a step further by composing a solo similar to Exercise 50. Set limitations for yourself and connect the dots between the guide tones.

Enclosure and the Use of Approach Tones

In the last section I was being very strict with the examples and exercises. I was keeping them diatonic, being sure not to go astray with notes outside of the key.

But one defining characteristic about jazz language is the use of chromaticism. Jazz musicians are constantly using notes outside of the diatonic key center to connect their lines.

So if guide tones and voice leading taught you how to bring the chord changes out in your playing, this next topic expands upon this.

A great way to conceptualize the way jazz musicians approach guide tones and other chord tones is through **enclosure**.

What is enclosure?

Enclosure is the process of approaching a target note from above and below either diatonically or chromatically.

To understand this, it is important to understand what a **target note** is. It's not rocket science, but it's worth a dignified definition.

What is a target note?

A target note is a note that is being resolved to by a series of approach tones.

There I did it again. Another term included in a definition that also needs defining itself. You also need to understand what **approach tones** are.

What are approach tones?

Approach tones are the notes being used to resolve to a target note. There are two kinds:

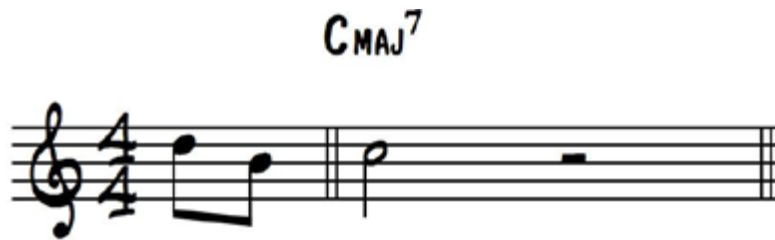
Diatonic approach:

A note approaching the target tone that is related to the given key center. For example, a B approaching a C in the key center of C major is diatonic.

Chromatic approach:

A note approaching the target tone that is not related to the given key center. For example, a C# approaching a C in the key center of C major, is chromatic.

To make proper sense of all of this, let's go over some examples.

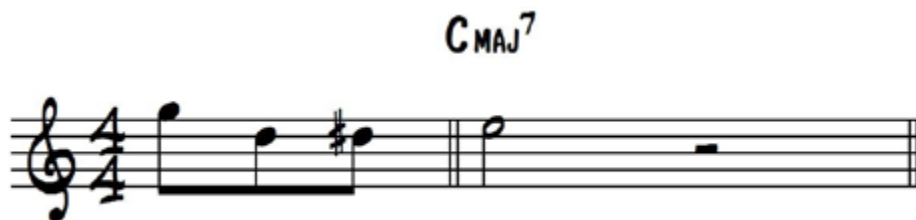


In this particular case the target note is the **root (C)**, and it is being approached by a **whole step above (D)**, and a **half step below (B)**.

Both of them are diatonic approach tones.

Do you see where the term enclosure comes from now? Essentially the target note is being "enclosed" by the D and the B.

Let's go over another example of enclosure. The last example included three notes total, but you can also have four.



This one is targeting the **3rd** of Cmaj7 (E), and is approached diatonically from above (G), diatonically from below (D), and chromatically from below (D#). As you should already know, the 3rd is an important guide tone, so this going to make for a strong sounding resolution.

Let's take a look at another. This is an example of enclosure that uses the **target note twice**.



This one is both diatonically approached (F) and chromatically approached (D#) by a half step. We'll put this particular enclosure pattern into practice in a second.

So far all of our examples start with an approach from above, but you can also start with an **approach from below**.



There are many possibilities for enclosure, and as long as you understand the concept, you can continue to come up with different enclosure patterns yourself.

So far we've looked at enclosures over single chords. We'll get to chord progressions in a second, but let's first step back and try applying enclosure to a scale.

In the Scales chapter we went over all of the important scales you should know and we also practiced patterns over them. In that same spirit, we can apply enclosure patterns to **scales**.

Exercise 51



This is a C major scale with an enclosure pattern that plays the target note twice per scale tone. The first four bars are ascending and the last four are descending. I'll circle the scale tones so you can see the scale clearly.



Notice how the descending scale flips the enclosure on its head. Now the target note is played twice and connected by a chromatic approach tone, and the last note goes up to the next scale degree.

PRACTICE CHALLENGE #15

Easier

- Go back to the Scales chapter and pick out three scales (besides the major) and apply the enclosure pattern found in Exercise 51 to them.

Challenging

- Take those three enclosure pattern scales into all 12 keys.

Now let's apply enclosure to a chord progression. We've worked a lot with the ii-V-I so let's use it as an example.



Notice how the 3rds of each chord are being targeted. You already know that the 3rd is a strong resolution guide tone.

I want you to notice something else important. What is the 7th of Dmin7? **C**. Remember how the 7th of a minor 7 resolves so smoothly with the 3rd of dominant 7th chord? Well that's exactly what is happening, except there is a chromatic approach tone in between them.

This is enclosure working alongside of voice lead guide tones!



CA= Chromatic approach

I think you know where I'm going with this next. Let's connect the dots. For this next exercise we are going to stick with these enclosures but fill in the rest of the space with eighth notes.

Exercise 52



The only two differences with this exercise and the previous example is the **target tone is no longer anticipated**, and the **enclosure into the I chord is up an octave**.

To be very clear, here's the exercise again with the enclosures circled.



Do you see how this ii-V-I came to life? The use of enclosures and chromaticism brought on a new, colorful dynamic. Once you understand this concept and begin to put it into practice in different musical environments, the doors will open wide for your jazz improvisation.

If you followed along with the Guide Tones and Voice Leading chapter, you know what's probably coming next. We need to apply enclosure to a song.

I think a great way to put this to practice is over a blues.

However, I'm going to do something that may frustrate you. It's either going to frustrate you or it's going to invigorate you.

Exercise 53

Exercise 53 is a 12-measure blues progression in 4/4 time, consisting of three staves. The first staff contains measures 1 through 4, with chords C⁷, F⁷, C⁷, and an empty measure. The second staff contains measures 5 through 8, with chords F⁷, C⁷, and two empty measures. The third staff contains measures 9 through 12, with chords G⁷, F⁷, C⁷, and an empty measure.

Now you may be thinking: ***what is this!? It's just a C blues with nothing in it! What is it?***

I'll tell you what it is. **It's a blank canvas.**

Do you remember at the very beginning of this book, I told you *"This is not your regular music book"*?

Specifically, I told you that throughout this book I would be **calling you to action**. I've kept my promise all the way through. I've given you Practice Challenges and I've asked you to go above and beyond what I've provided on the pages.

It would be easy for me to show you a blues with enclosure, and how I connected the dots. **But why should I do it when you are now perfectly capable of doing it yourself?**

You see, if you've been following along from the beginning, you will have all of the tools to be able to create Exercise 53 for yourself. I know you can do it! I believe you can do it. The answers all lie within the various chapters of this book.

So I couldn't think of a more appropriate way to end this book then by calling you to action one last time.

PRACTICE CHALLENGE #16

Easier

- Print this page, or take out some notation paper, and write in enclosures that connect the chords in a C blues. Then go and compose a solo that connects the dots between them. Be able to play it on your instrument.

Challenging

- You guessed it. Take your solo into all 12 keys.

Final Thoughts

Jazz is social music. It's living, breathing, and constantly evolving. Jazz language is rich and full.

Remember the Jazz Improvisation Rule? **To become a better jazz improviser, you need to understand jazz harmony.**

If you can understand how jazz harmony works, then you can understand how to develop melodies over it.

When you understand scales, you can understand how chord tones can be drawn from them to build chords. When you understand how chords can be harmonized with scales, you can understand how chord progressions work. When you understand how chord progressions work, you can understand the harmonic flow of a jazz standard.

Here's what all of us need to do to become better jazz improvisers:

First and foremost, we need to be listening to the music.

- » We need to be learning licks and solos from jazz musicians we admire.
- » We need to be learning jazz standards.
- » We need to be working on our instruments, and learning how to navigate them.
- » We need to be going out there and playing with others.
- » Becoming a great jazz improviser takes practice. You could literally spend the rest of your life working on the stuff I've provided for you in this book. Musicianship is a journey. Luckily for us, it's a fun one that allows for constant discovery.

Don't ever cease to be dedicated to your craft. Jazz improvement (or improvement of any kind) will never come cheap and easy. **Study hard and enjoy yourself.**

I hope you take everything you've learned from this book, practice it, and then go out there and forget it all. Charlie Parker said it best:

"You've got to learn your instrument. Then, you practice, practice, practice. And then, when you finally get up there on the bandstand, forget all that and just wail."

Get out there and play, and when you do play, don't think too hard. Thinking hard is for the practice room, not the band stand.

I wish you the best of luck on your musical journey!

-Brent

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